











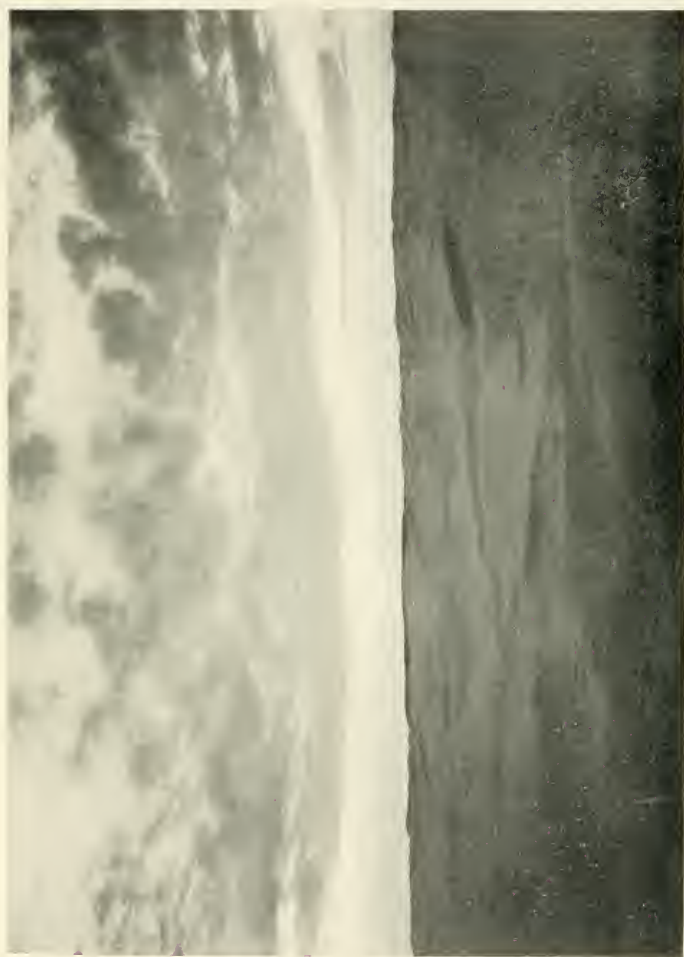


AFRICAN SHORES  
OF THE  
MEDITERRANEAN





THE MYSTERY  
OF THE DESERT



THE MYSTERY OF THE DESERT

# AFRICAN SHORES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

BY

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AND

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## PREFACE

It is proverbially difficult *proprie communia dicere*, or to be original without becoming also unduly imaginative ; and, although the writers know of no single work which covers the same ground as the present volume, whole literatures have sprung up round the various subjects of which they treat. They can only claim that they have described no place which they did not visit, and no custom which they did not themselves observe during a protracted sojourn in North Africa.

For the facts which lie outside the range of such first-hand evidence, they have consulted, so far as possible, the original authorities. In cases where the opinion of a single author has been relied upon, on any special point, a reference has been given in the text.

For the first part, which is mainly historical, the writer, in addition to the standard books of reference, has consulted, especially, the following works, and desires to express his indebtedness to them :—

*The Religion of the Semites*, Robertson Smith, Chap. i.-ii.

*The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, Wiedemann, Chap. ii.

*Les Civilisations de l'Afrique du Nord*, Victor Piquet, Chap. xiv.-xvi.

*L'Afrique Romaine*, Gaston Boissier, Chap. vi., vii., viii.

*L'Algérie*, Maurice Wahl, Chap. xiv., xvi.

*Les Villes d'Art Célèbres*, René Cagnat et Henri Saladin, Chap. vi., xi., xiii.

*Les Ruines de Carthage*, le R. P. Delattre, Chap. xi.

*Thugga*, Dr. Carton, Chap. ix.

*Carthage Chrétienne*, Abel Alcais, Chap. x.

*The Scourge of Christendom*, Sir Lambert Playfair, Chap. xvi.

*The Barbary Corsairs*, S. Lane Poole, Chap. xvi.

*Alger au XVIII. Siècle*, Venture de Paradis, Chap. xvi.-xvii.

*Sketches of Algiers*, W. Shaler, Chap. xvii.

The writers' hearty thanks are also due to those who have most kindly allowed them the free use of their photographs; the illustrations not otherwise assigned are from photographs taken by the writers themselves.

In conclusion, it would be ungracious not to add a word of recognition of the thoroughness and skill with which the work of excavation is being conducted by the French authorities; of admiration of the excellent series of monographs which they are issuing; and of gratitude for the courtesy with which the writers were everywhere received.

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# PART I

0

A.



# 'TWIXT SAND AND SEA

## CHAPTER I

THE CITY OF ELISSAR, 850-264 B.C.

IT was about <sup>1</sup> the year 850 B.C. that Elissar, Princess of Sidon, fled from her native country, after the murder of her husband Sychœus <sup>2</sup> by her brother Pygmalion. Descended from Ethbaal or Ithbaal, King of Sidon, she was the niece of Jezebel and the cousin of Athaliah. Thus, a Wake or Dido, she landed on the shores of the Gulf of Tunis, not far from the little Sidonian port of Combé. Hospitably received by the natives and their King, Iarbas, Son of Hammon, who subsequently became a suitor for her hand, she repaid their kindness by tricking them out of a site for a city on the little hill of Byrsa. There and thus Carthage was founded. At the foot of the hill she dug a *Cothon* or harbour, to which she welcomed the battered galleys of Æneas, like herself a wanderer from the flames of Troy-town.

In the end, *capta ac deserta*, betrayed and forsaken by her faithless guest, she built a great pyre outside her palace, and cast herself despairingly upon it : so

<sup>1</sup> Rollin is more precise. He makes Elissar the granddaughter of Ethbaal, and places the foundation of Carthage in the reign of Joash, King of Judah, ninety-eight years before Rome was founded, 846 B.C.—that is, in the year of the world 3158.

<sup>2</sup> Sychœus, Sicharbas, "Commemoration of Baal." This is not a divine title. Pygmalion, according to M. Ph. Berger, means, probably, "The Foot of the Most High."

she perished, either to bring upon the traitor the doom he so richly deserved, or to escape the importunities of her unwelcome suitor, Iarbas, or to rejoin in death her murdered husband.

In the light of other kindred myths of the Semites, a very profound and interesting interpretation may be given to the story. We are taught to see in the Queen, the Dido who accompanies the Pilgrim Fathers on their way, and helps them to build their new city, no mere woman, however exalted, but a divine being; and in her willing death the noble self-sacrifice of a goddess, who leaps into the flames and dies to consecrate and win a blessing for the city she has founded. Thenceforth she became the Tyché, or Luck, the patron saint of the place for which she had died; and, in the yearly offering of a maiden at her shrine, her death was commemorated and mystically renewed. What awful act of sacrifice or self-sacrifice may lie behind the myth we cannot tell; similar rites were practised at Tarsus; and, in the stories of Hercules Melcarth and Sardanapalus, traces of a kindred legend may be found. Certainly the idea of a God who so loves His people that He freely pours out His soul even unto death for the sake of those He loves was familiar to Semitic thought long before its perfect fulfilment.

Who, then, was Elissar? The answer, up to a certain point, is tolerably plain. Both Elissar and Pygmalion were apparently titles of Ashtart,<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> On many Tyrian coins Ashtart is represented, like the Victory of Samothrace, standing in the prow of a ship, her right hand outstretched as if to point the way, and holding a crown. M. Ph. Berger writes, unhesitatingly (*Le Mythe de Pygmalion*, p. 3), "Dido is one of the forms of the great Asiatic Goddess." He has also read the name "Ashtart Pygmalion" on a gold dish of the sixth century B.C. found at the cemetery of *Douimes* at Carthage.

biblical Ashtoreth,<sup>1</sup> goddess of the Sidonians. To identify her with Tanith, the supreme divinity of Carthage, attractive as it would be, is difficult; for, as will be shown later on, Tanith was, in all probability, a Libyan, not a Phœnician, goddess; but various hints, such as that of Justin, that her pyre was built "at the end of the town"—that is, of Byrsa, the city of Elissar—would suit an identification of the Temple of Dido, and the scene of her death, with the Sanctuary of Tanith, which stood somewhere between Byrsa and the sea. Here it was that, in later days, the human sacrifices of the Carthaginians were offered to the goddess; and even so late as the fourth century of our era, the spot, enclosed in a thicket of thorns, and inhabited, so it was said, by asps and dragons, was surrounded with superstitious terrors.<sup>2</sup> It was even found necessary to destroy a Christian church erected on the spot, or into which the temple itself had possibly been transformed, in order to put an end to the polluted rites of which it had been so long the abode. Perhaps it would be safer to say that, as the Phœnician settlers, and their worship, became Libyanised, the worship of Elissar Ashtart paled before, and at last was supplanted by, that of the Libyan goddess.

Such, at any rate, is the legend in its best-known form, and the best interpretation which can, at present, be placed upon it. The story of the bull's hide which Elissar cut into strips to measure her grant of land with, may be at once put aside. It arose merely from an accidental similarity of sound between the Greek word for an ox-hide and the Phœnician word for a fortress, Byrsa, or BIRTHA, the

<sup>1</sup> That is, Ashtart, with the vowels of Bosheth, "Abomination."

<sup>2</sup> *Sil. Ital.*, l. 81.

biblical Bozrah. Apart from its decorative details, the fable is valuable merely as a testimony to Phœnician trade methods and the inventive faculty of the Greeks ; while, in order to bring Elissar and Æneas together, Vergil was compelled to do that which, we are told, lies beyond the power of the very gods themselves, and

“ annihilate both time and space

To make two lovers ”

unhappy.

That Carthage was Phœnician in origin, its name Karthhadach,<sup>1</sup> the New City, or Naples—the Greek Karchedon and the Latin Karthago—tells us plainly enough. It shows also that it was not the first of these settlements ; it was new in comparison to Utica, Outich, the Old City, which lay to the north-west across the marshy plain and Sebka, which were then the Gulf of Utica ; new in comparison with Tunis (Tunes) at the head of its lake, or with Combé, which stood near, if not on the very site where Carthage was built. The precise relation of the New to the Old City is doubtful ; on the whole, it seems probable that Carthage was not an offshoot or dependency of the Tyrian Utica, but rather a Sidonian city founded in rivalry with it. At any rate it was content, until 450 B.C., to pay a rent for the ground on which it stood to the Berber tribe of the Maxyes.

We are so accustomed to speak of the inhabitants as Carthaginians or Phœnicians or Pœni, that it is difficult to realise that the name by which they called themselves was none of these, but “ Canaanite,” a man of the plains, a Lowlander. The Greeks gave the country from which they came the name of Phœnike, the Land of Purple, or of the Red Men ; the Romans corrupted the name into Pœni or Punians ;

<sup>1</sup> Karth, akin to the biblical kirjath.

but even so late as in Christian times an African farmer would call himself a Canaanite.

The site of the new city was well chosen.<sup>1</sup>

Low down on the Gulf of Tunis, sheltered from every wind that blows except the north-east, from which a little bay and a great breakwater protected the entrance to the harbours, an isthmus, ending in a triangular or fan-shaped peninsula, juts out some ten miles into the sea. On the south it is washed by the shallow waters of the Lake of Tunis; on the north by what is now the Salt Lake or Lagoon, called the Sebka er Riana, but which was then the open Gulf of Utica, where the great river Medjerda, or Bagradas, emptied its sullen waters into the sea. The river has now changed its course, and vast banks of sand have collected, changing the gulf into a lake.

From the head of the Lake of Tunis to the Gulf of Utica runs the protecting mountain range of the Djebel Ahmor, a formidable barrier between the isthmus and the mainland; somewhere in these mountains lay the cave into which, on the fatal hunting day, Juno Pronuba led Elissar and the Dux Trojanus to shelter from the storm, while the nymphs shrieked upon the hill-tops. It was the day which began the long enmity between Carthage and Rome which was to end only when Scipio wiped the great city of Elissar off the face of the earth.

At its mountain base the isthmus has a width of nearly ten miles, but it soon shrinks to little more than two; then it spreads out again in long even curves into the fan-shaped peninsula already spoken

<sup>1</sup> With his characteristic love of legend, or, as we should call it, folk-lore, Vergil tells us (*Aen.* i. 444), that Juno, or Ashtart, or Tanith, commanded Elissar to build on the spot where she should find a horse's head. The place was marked by a sacred grove.

of, where it has a breadth of six miles. The northern point of the open fan is occupied by the hills of Kamart; the southern by the narrow neck of land called the Ligula or Tœnia,<sup>1</sup> which, like Chesil Beach or the Palisades of Kingston Harbour, shuts in, save for a narrow break in the middle, the Lake of Tunis. From the Ligula the shore line runs due north-east for a distance of about four miles, where it ends in Cape Carthage, the central point of the fan. For the first two and a half miles the shore is flat, then it rises rapidly into the hill now crowned with the New Fort, Bordj el Djedid, and then, higher still, into the rocky headland of the cape where stood the old Pharos, and now stands the lighthouse.

The trend of the northern shore is very similar, only, of course, in opposite directions. A long curve to the north-east ends in the heights of the Djebel Khaoui or Kamart, corresponding to the Ligula to the south. Then, turning to the south-east, the coast runs to Cape Carthage. This section of the coast is mountainous, save for a single dip at La Marsa close under the cape.<sup>2</sup> On this great triangle of land stood Carthage.

The beginnings of the city were, however, much more modest. We can trace them, with some degree of accuracy, by the position of the cemeteries, of which the sides of the hills are full; for by the Semites, as by the Romans, the dead were considered unclean, and could not be buried within the walls of the city.

<sup>1</sup> Now called La Goulette.

<sup>2</sup> The distances are, approximately, as follows:—

Cape Carthage to Kamart . . . . .	4 miles
Cape Carthage to the Ligula . . . . .	4 miles
Across the isthmus from Kamart to the Ligula . . . . .	6 miles
Cape Carthage to a point on the centre of this line across the isthmus . . . . .	1 mile

In this way we learn that the earliest settlement was not on Byrsa at all, but on the seashore just outside the Ligula, where, afterwards, the great harbours were excavated. Here the coast, turning abruptly to the east, forms a little sheltered bay, well fitted to be the harbour of the first inhabitants, as it was to be the entrance to the harbours in later days. About a mile due north of this bay, nearly the same distance from Bordj el Djedid, and about half a mile from the sea, stands the hill of Byrsa ; on the land side it rises up, by a steep ascent, to a height of about two hundred feet ; on the other it drops precipitously towards the sea. With the exception of the Acropolis of Athens and the Capitol of Rome, it is perhaps the most famous hill on the face of the earth. When first included within the bounds of the city, it was, as its name implies, a fortress or kasbah ; in course of time, when tyranny at home was more feared than attack from abroad, it was consecrated to religious uses, and became, like the other two, the central shrine of the national worship.

Two lines drawn from Byrsa—the one south, to the Ligula, the other east, to the seashore, south of Bordj el Djedid—would enclose the site of the city proper, which was to greater Carthage what the City is to greater London. Within its walls were contained the great Temple of Eschmoun, the cathedral of Carthage, which stood on the hill of Byrsa itself ; the less officially important, but more popular, Temples of Hammon and Tanith ; the naval harbour or Cothon, opening into the commercial harbour, and, through it, reaching the sea ; the long line of quays which reached from the Ligula to Bordj el Djedid, and the Forum, which was at once the market, the Royal Exchange, the Law Courts and the Guild Hall of the city.

Punic in origin, Carthage remained, so far as the government was concerned, Punic to the end. Its constitution was a narrow and rigid oligarchy, from which all but the old Punic families were jealously excluded. There was no extension of the franchise or citizenship, such as, from time to time, replenished the ranks of the Republic of Rome, offered a reward to capacity and service, and repaid or secured the fidelity of the cities of the Empire.

The bulwark of this oligarchy was the council of one hundred, actually one hundred and four, of which the magistrates or "Suffetes" <sup>1</sup> were little more than the officials. As these offices were for sale, it became practically a government of capitalists, in which the great families, Magon, Giscon, or Barcas, could obtain from time to time a predominant influence. Decayed grandees were enabled to retrieve their fortunes from the spoils of lucrative offices, such as those of tax-collectors.

Thus the oligarchy degenerated into a plutocracy, vulgar, ostentatious, self-indulgent, and heartless. The story of the contemptuous amusement with which the Carthaginians received the report of their ambassadors, that the whole Senate of Rome possessed only one service of silver plate, which reappeared at every dinner-party they were invited to, sufficiently describes them.

As with the equally vulgar nobles of the Roman Empire, it was the fashion to collect works of art, and, as it was easy to employ Greek artists, or to steal original statues, &c., ready made, from Greece or Sicily, the Carthaginian millionaires filled their palaces with works of Greek art; thus setting an example which, in due time, the Romans followed, when, in

<sup>1</sup> Shafetes, or Shophetim, the judges.

their turn, they looted Carthage. Of their Architecture it is difficult to judge, save from the tombs ; these are for the most part strongly influenced by Greece and Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, they possessed and developed in a high degree the Semitic aptitude for banking and business generally, which has made the Jews the financiers of the world. It is said that they used paper money, of no intrinsic value, in the same way that bank notes and cheques are used now.

They have left no traces of any natural science, or art, or literature, save on the one subject of agriculture. They possessed no growing or spreading aptitude for political life, and they showed no desire for free forms of government.

The Carthaginians had no lust for empire, save that of the sea, and of the ports and markets which were necessary to secure and develop their trade. They never fought if they could help it. Though capable of spasmodic outbursts of desperate valour, they allowed themselves to be supplanted in Egypt, Greece, Italy, and East Sicily almost without a struggle ; in the great trade war with Greece it was their allies, the Etruscans, who did most of the fighting at Cumæ (280 B.C.) and Alatia (217 B.C.). They lived in Africa "after the manner of the Zidonians" in their old land, "quiet and secure" in "a place where there is no want of anything that is on the earth." <sup>2</sup>

As the city grew in power, wealth, and population, the necessity for some territory was increasingly felt, and they pressed forward gradually, submerging the various cities which came in their way, destroying

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the chapter on "Four Great Tombs."

<sup>2</sup> Judges xviii. 10.

their walls (except in the case of Utica), and imposing on them a tribute of money or of men. Thus Leptis Parva,<sup>1</sup> south of Sousse, was assessed at 365 talents (£90,000) a year.

By degrees they advanced in this tentative way, until they occupied, more or less completely, a territory corresponding fairly with modern Tunisia and the department of Constantine. The Libyan fortress of Tebessa was not captured until the time of the First Punic War.<sup>2</sup> Even within these limits it was frequently a matter of alliance rather than of conquest. The famous inscription from the mausoleum at Dougga<sup>3</sup> to Ataban, son of Ifmatel, son of Falao, is in Libyan as well as Phœnician, and records an intermarriage between the two peoples; and the other similar monuments at Kasserine, and Kroubs (near Cirta), and elsewhere, show that it was by alliance with the native princes, rather than by war, that they preferred to spread their sphere of influence, and obtained permission to establish settlements and markets. It was in this way that they were able to recruit their armies from among a warlike but, on the whole, friendly population. Such privileges as these were all that the Pœni required, and for these they were ready, if need were, to pay tribute.

This principle of alliance, rather than conquest, was carried so far that when, at the time of the wars with Rome, Cirta was taken from its rightful King, Masinissa, it was not seized by Carthage, but left in the hands of Syphax, King of Massesyliæ,<sup>4</sup> whose alliance was purchased with the hand of Sophonisba. The territory actually belonging to Carthage, or Africa, consisted of little more than the corner of

<sup>1</sup> Now Lamta.      <sup>2</sup> Polyb. i. 73.      <sup>3</sup> Now in the British Museum.

<sup>4</sup> His capital was at Siga, west of Oran.

land between Thabraka (Tabarca) to the west and Taparura (Sfax) to the south ; and this was all that the Romans annexed, under the name of " *Provincia Africa*." The land thus occupied was, for the most part, divided into vast estates and worked by slaves, a single owner possessing sometimes as many as twenty thousand ; the native farmers and peasantry, when not altogether dispossessed, were reduced to the position of serfs or felahin, and paid a rent of one quarter of the produce of the land. Under these conditions, agriculture became exceedingly scientific, and the treatise on the subject by the Carthaginian Magon remained long a text-book among the Romans.

Of this city of Elissar, the Romans did not leave one stone upon another ; two little ponds mark the site of the harbours, the immense systems of cisterns at La Malga, near Bordj el Djedid and elsewhere, though remodelled by the Romans, were probably Punic in origin ; a fragment or two of wall in Byrsa possibly belong to the Punic fortifications ; a number of votive tablets witness to the faith of the people ; beyond this there is nothing save a grim layer of ashes mixed<sup>1</sup> with bones of men, women, and children, and the graves of the dead.

As it is from these cemeteries that we can trace the position of the earliest settlement and the gradual growth of the city, so it is from their contents and from the manner in which the dead were laid in them that we learn what little is known of the life of the inhabitants of the city.

The sides of all the hills are full of tombs, some reaching back to the seventh century before Christ, while others date from the times of the Punic Wars.

In the earliest of the cemeteries, which lie nearest

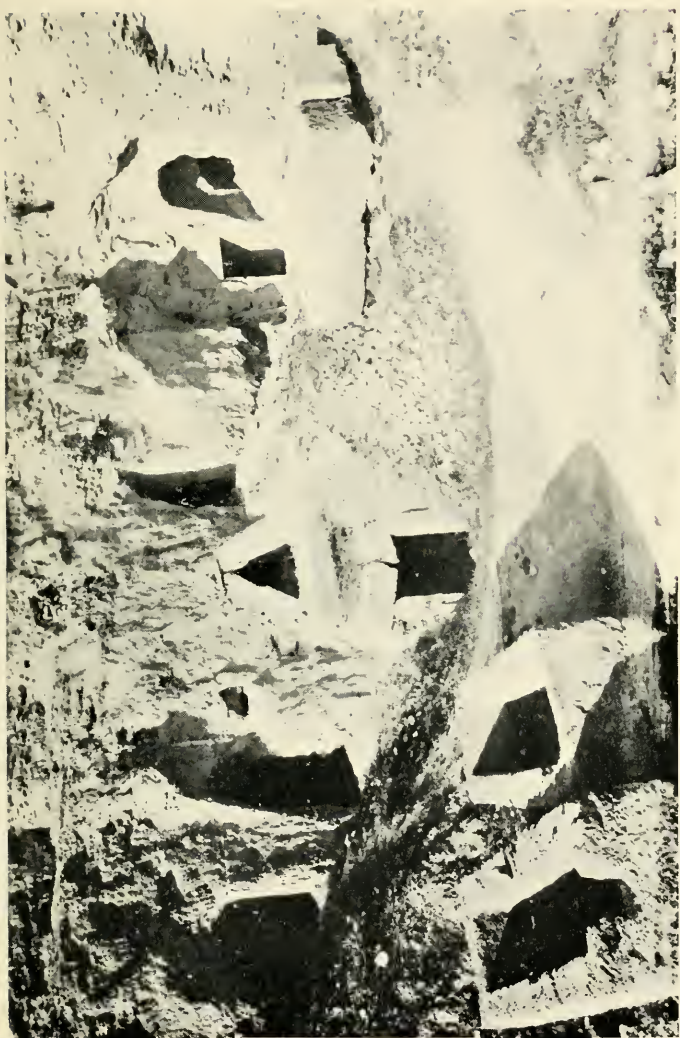
<sup>1</sup> This layer is about five feet thick.

the sea, the dead were laid in the ground without coffin or covering of any kind ; but later on a different and very elaborate system of burial was adopted. A vertical shaft was sunk into the ground or rock to a depth of about thirty feet, large enough to allow of the body being lowered on a litter or bier. At the bottom, lateral chambers were excavated ; the walls were covered with stucco, so fine and white as to glisten like snow in the lamplight, and so close in texture as to ring like metal when struck. Above the stucco ran a cornice of cedar supporting a ceiling of the same wood. The whole was roofed in with great slabs of stone, the weight of the earth above being borne by other stones inclined one against the other, and forming the curious triangles which are so distinctive of these sepulchres. The entrance was blocked with a great stone, and finally the shaft was filled up with earth. In these chambers the dead, decked out sumptuously, were laid on beds, facing the entrance ; they were surrounded, not by any dismal funeral trappings, but by lamps, vases of perfumes, and other familiar household furniture, so that, when they awoke from their sleep,<sup>1</sup> they might find themselves at home with all the gear and housing of their earthly lives around them.

Later still a fresh modification was adopted ; the body was laid in a stone sarcophagus and sealed up with resin. On the lid was carved a recumbent image of the dead, sometimes of great dignity and beauty. Of these effigies the most noticeable is that of Tanith, or the "priestess," hereafter to be described.<sup>2</sup> Another

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it would be more accurate to say, in accordance with Egyptian beliefs, "when the spirit revisited the body." Pap. iii. 36, in the Louvre, shows the winged soul descending just such a shaft to reach the mummy.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* p. 29.



PUNIC TOMBS IN BYRSA, CARTHAGE



represents a Rab, or priest. In this the features are grandly calm and dignified, the hair abundant and curly, the beard and moustaches full. A long robe descends to the sandalled feet; over this a short cloak falls from the left shoulder to the hip. The right hand is uplifted in prayer; the left, bent at the elbow, holds a vase of offerings.

A third is of a lady. The hair stands high over the forehead and is brought down on each side of the face in two long plaits or curls. The whole body is clothed in a soft robe, gathered in loosely at the waist and falling in graceful folds to the sandalled feet. Over the head is drawn a long veil; it is held by the right hand, which is thrown boldly forward, while the left hand draws it easily across the body. The figure is very Greek in conception; except for the position of the right hand, it follows closely the lines of the Greek funeral monuments, a very lovely example of which is in the Vatican Museum, under the name of "Pudicitia."

Besides these carvings, there have been found in these tombs a series of terra-cotta masks, so skilfully modelled and so characteristic as to require a word of notice. Some of them are mere grotesques, admirably conceived and executed; these were placed near the dead to frighten away evil spirits by their grimaces. Others, equally skilful, are more interesting in that they seem to be likenesses of real men and women. These are distinguished by wearing a metal ring, the biblical "Nezem," piercing through the central cartilage of the nose.

The first is a man. The face is a long oval, the forehead high, and the hair, short and curly, grows low upon it; the ears, large and projecting, are pierced for earrings. The upper lip and chin are

clean-shaven, but the cheeks are covered with bushy whiskers, descending to the jaw. The cheek-bones are high, the nose long, straight and pointed. The eyes and mouth are drawn up at the corners, giving a shrewd, humorous expression to the countenance. Altogether the whole face is pleasant and life-like.

The only other mask I need speak of is that of a woman. It is curiously different from the first. A snood, like an Egyptian Kluft, covers all the hair except a little fringe of curls over the forehead, and is drawn down behind the ears over the breast. The ears are large and pierced for five rings, two in the lobe and three in the upper fold. The nose is very heavy and bulbous, the eyes large and drawn upwards as in the other case; the chin small and receding, the mouth small and drawn up in a smile. The whole expression is so kindly that the ugliness of the nose and ears is forgotten.

Such, then, were the great lords, the Hasdrubals and Hamilcars of Carthage; such her mariners who wandered over the seas as far as Britain; and such the home-staying folk, the mothers and wives who welcomed the sailors when the voyage was over.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GODS OF CARTHAGE

THE religion of the Carthaginians was elementary in its conceptions, and tended to foster rather than to restrain the elementary instincts of lust and cruelty. The names and attributes of the principal gods are not difficult to ascertain, but the source of the religion is still doubtful and obscure.

The official god was Eschmoun, a god of vital force, whom the Greeks identified with Asclepios, and the Romans with their god of healing, Æsculapius. His chief sanctuary was a vast enclosure, half-fortress, half-temple, on the eastern brow of Byrsa, from which a monumental flight of sixty marble steps led down into the city. His worship was always purely and essentially Phœnician—in fact, from a natural exclusiveness and pride of race, the Pœni do not seem to have identified him with any local deity, or to have spread his cult beyond a few purely Carthaginian settlements. Even at Lambæsis (Lambessa), where there was a temple to Æsculapius, which in general form and arrangement was Libyan rather than Roman, the presence of hot springs suggests that it was dedicated to the Roman, not to the Punic god.

But even in Carthage itself, with its seven hundred thousand inhabitants, the pure-blooded Phœnicians formed but a small part of the population. The bulk of the people consisted of half-castes, slaves, and traders of all races, and, above all, of native Libyans ; the position of the Pœni resembled that of the English

at Shanghai, or Cairo, or Calcutta. The common language of the people was Libyan; among the five hundred skulls which have been measured by Dr. Bertholon, he assures us that hardly any were Phœnician, and, according to the same authority, the funeral customs of burying the dead in a crouching position, of dispersing the bones, and of laying the dead to rest in an earthenware crate, which he has observed in the native cemeteries at Carthage, were Libyan.<sup>1</sup> There would therefore be nothing surprising if the same were true of religion, and if the gods most generally worshipped were Libyan also, or at least Libyan in reality, though roughly and vaguely identified with the gods of Phœnicia first, as of Rome afterwards.

Interesting as are such inquiries into the origins of religion, we must remember that problems and questions which perplex us hardly existed in the dim antiquity in which we are groping. So long as religion had hardly emerged from the simple personification and worship of the powers of nature, two races worshipping the same natural object or force would probably use very similar rites, and, when they came into contact with one another, would find little difficulty in recognising the same divinity under different names; each could say to the other, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

There were two gods who especially claimed the allegiance of Carthage, Hammon, or, as he is usually called, Baal Hammon, and Tanith; and it is worthy of notice that whereas the worship of Eschmoun practically vanished with Punic Carthage, the cult of these two not only survived the destruction of the

<sup>1</sup> Similar burials are found at El Keb Nakada and elsewhere in Egypt. Cf. *The Nile* (Budge), pp. 71 and 435, and De Morgan's *Recherches sur les Origines de l'Égypte*. Cf. Bertholon's *Religion des Libyens*, pp. 3-6.

city by the Romans, but, under the names of Saturn and Cœlestis or Ceres, was adopted, developed, and spread far and wide by the new conquerors.

## BAAL HAMMON

The title *Baal* is certainly Phœnician, but, although the tendency of Phœnician religious thought was undoubtedly to personify the attributes of Baal, the word itself is not a name, but a title, and means little more than "lord" or "owner." The citizens of a town were its *baalim*; if a man irrigated a plot of ground and so became its owner, he was its *baal*; in the case of an oasis, or other land fertilised by natural sources, this was conceived of as the work of a god, who became its *baal*. Conspicuous hill-tops were specially fitted for the burning of victims, and so became by degrees sanctuaries of the *baal* to whom such sacrifices were offered.<sup>1</sup> The title *baal*, therefore, tells us little except that the Carthaginians adopted into their pantheon the god to whom it was applied, and gave him their title of honour.

The meaning and origin of the name Hammon (or Khammon) is a matter of much greater difficulty and uncertainty. If Phœnician, it may mean "The Shining One," or "The Sun Pillar," though, according to Semitic use, it would be more natural to take it as the name of a place than of a divinity. But it is not at all necessary to look to Phœnician sources for the origin of the name or of the god. Even if we are unable to accept Dr. Bertholon's derivation of A-moun, "The Moun," it is both simpler and better to turn to Libyan and Egyptian than to Phœnician worship. If

<sup>1</sup> Thus in the Bible we find Baal-Peor, Numbers xxv. 3, and generally the "high places" of Baal. For many of these details the writer is indebted to *The Religion of the Semites*.

we do so we may identify him with the Hamon worshipped at Thebes in union with Mut and Khonsu, at Sais with Neith and Khonsu, at Heliopolis as Amon-Ra, and especially with the Ammon whose shrine and oracle lay in the oasis of Siwa, three hundred and fifty miles south-west of Cairo. There he was worshipped not only under the Egyptian form of a ram, but also in connection with a sacred stone, to which it is impossible to ascribe an Egyptian origin, though it naturally suggests the Artemis of the Ephesians, the Astart of Paphos, and the Bethels, or Betyls, which were such important objects of adoration to the Semites, that their worship was carried wherever Semitic colonists penetrated.

As a close connection always existed between the oasis and the Phœnician colonies of North Africa, we may well find here the link between Semitic and Libyan worship for which we are looking, and recognise in the Zeus Ammon of the Greeks, the Jupiter Ammon of the Romans, and the Amon-Ra of the Egyptians, the Baal Hammon of Sidonian Carthage.

In the time of the new empire (Twentieth Dynasty, 1200 B.C.), the name was explained as meaning "The Hidden One," and Ammon was held to be the secret, all-pervading power of the sun; but of his original nature the Egyptians themselves seem to have lost all knowledge and even tradition; nor is this extraordinary if he were, in truth, an autochthonous god of the Libyans. According to Wiedemann, the name is derived from the same root as "Amenti," which designates both the west and the underworld, and suggests that he may have been at one time a god of the dead. Other texts, especially those connecting Ammon with Min, would lead us to regard him as personifying the continual self-renewing energy of

nature. The sacred animal of Min was also a ram, and he was a god of the generative powers of nature. Behind the figure of this god there is generally placed a shrine with trees, recalling the sacred groves of both Baal Hammon and Tanith.

The name of another Egyptian god, "Ment," who ranked next in importance to Amon in the Theban nome, seems to be radically connected with Amon; indeed Wiedemann considers it probable that the two gods were originally identical. His sacred animal was the bull, Bakh, the Bacis of the Greeks; and, as Bacis is called in the texts "the living soul of Ra," it is clear that, when the name was given, the fusion of the two gods had already been accomplished. Ment was the Egyptian war god, and as such he is sometimes linked with the Semitic Baal, and the combined might of Ment and Baal, when granted to a king, was esteemed the very epitome of strength.

If these identifications be correct, we come to the conclusion that Hammon was originally an autochthonous nature god of the Libyans, identified by degrees with the sun, but never so completely in North Africa as in Egypt; certainly he was never conceived of as the bright and glorious Amon-Ra, or Apollo. He was always a dark and terrible god, worshipped with horrible and bloody rites, the origin of which may be sought either in Libyan or in Phœnician cults. The sacred animals with which he was associated, and whose horns he wore, were the bull and, especially, the ram. Of his priests he demanded the sacrifice of their manhood, a mutilation which, in the modified form of circumcision, he required of all his servants. Like Baal, he was usually worshipped on high places: at Dougga, on the crest of a precipitous hill; at Carthage, although there is

no doubt that he had a temple in the city, near that of Tanith, between Byrsa and the sea, his principal sanctuary, consisting probably of little more than a sacred grove and enclosure, stood on the summit of Bou Kornein,<sup>1</sup> whose crescent height, above the hot springs of Hammam Lif, looks out over the city from beyond the Lake of Tunis. It was there that not only slaves and prisoners of war, but children of the purest blood of Carthage, passed through the fire to this African Moloch.<sup>2</sup> We are told that the unhappy parents tried to escape the awful sacrifice and to deceive the god by bringing up other children with their own and offering them in their place. On one occasion, when Agathocles was besieging the city, the Carthaginians, believing that they had alienated the god by the deceit which they had practised, decreed a solemn assembly at which two hundred of their children, of the noblest families, and three hundred volunteers were thus offered.<sup>3</sup> The little victims were frequently, if not usually, girls, ranging in age from about eight years to fifteen—that is, of marriageable age, like the daughter of Jephthah or Iphianassa.

“Nubendi tempore in ipso  
Hostia concideret mactatu mœsta parentis,  
Exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.  
Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.”<sup>4</sup>

In autumn, when both nature and the sun seem to languish and to die, two human victims were sacrificed each year, for the horned god was the god of fruitful

<sup>1</sup> “The horned Father,” lit. the “Father of horns”; cf. Gen. xiv. 5, Ashteroth Karnaim, “the horned Ashtart.”

<sup>2</sup> Moloch, like Baal, was a title, not a name. It is the word “Melek” or “King,” written with the vowel points of Bosheth or Abomination.

<sup>3</sup> Diod. xx. 14. Of these “volunteers” he adds, “who were liable to censure;” on what grounds is not clear.

<sup>4</sup> Lucretius, i. 88.

seasons as well as of the sun. Nor were these the only occasions. In the necropolis of the Rabs, near St. Monnica, Pere Delattre has discovered a number of skulls in a funeral chamber; two belonged to adults in coffins, but with them were the bones of about forty children, with those of certain animals, dogs and horses,<sup>1</sup> the funeral sacrifice for the dead. The garden and museum of St. Louis are lined with hundreds of little sarcophagi containing the charred bones of victims of these horrible rites.

It is a matter of common observation that, in religion as in other matters, cruelty and sensuality go together. Of the unclean rites, recalling the Bacchic orgies of the Mœnads, which accompanied the worship, it is fortunately unnecessary, even if it were possible, to speak in detail.

The Romans found the cult, adopted and spread it. They did not, however, identify Hammon with the sun god, but with Saturn, the Greek Chronos, or Time, the gloomy god, who devoured his children, until at last he was dethroned by one who escaped. Astrologers placed his abode in the distant planet which wanders slowly and dimly in its lonely orbit,

<sup>1</sup> The presence of these bones of animals is thus explained. The ritual of sacrifice required that certain parts of the victim should be eaten by the sacrificer. When, in time, such cannibalism became unendurable, men were allowed to offer domestic animals with the human sacrifices and eat the corresponding parts of these.

A friend tells me that, when he was travelling in North Africa some twenty years ago, he met a tribe which bred dogs, something like pugs in appearance, in great numbers. At certain times of the year these were eaten in solemn feasts. The natives could give no explanation of the custom; certainly they attributed no sacrificial character to the feasts. But in a land so full of survivals as North Africa, this has the appearance of being one.

In this connection it may be added that the Jews of Tunis are credited with fattening their daughters before marriage, on the flesh of a certain breed of dogs. I have been unable to verify this; but, whatever be the process, the results are amazing.

farthest from the sun ; on his day, the last of the week, it was at first unlucky, and then forbidden, to do any work. And so Baal Hammon of Bou Kornein became Saturnus Balcarnensis. Occasionally the identification was with Jupiter—in the Bardo at Tunis is an inscription, “IOVI HAMMONI BARBARO SILVANO SACERDOTES.” Sometimes it was with both ; thus we read on a votive tablet in the museum at Theveste (Tebessa)—

I.O.M.<sup>1</sup>

SATURNO AUGUSTO SAC

P. POMPONIV MAXIMVS

SAC. VOT. LIB. ANIMO. FEC.

Tiberius forbade the worship and crucified the priests to the trees of their sacred grove ; but it was in vain ; the cult lasted far on into Christian times ; traces of it may be found in the sacrifice of five children in 1535, when Charles V. threatened Tunis, and in the rite of circumcision ; and in the practices of one at least of the Moslem sects, the Aïssaouas,<sup>2</sup> it still lives on.

Of the Punic or Roman sanctuaries on Bou Kornein nothing remains except the countless votive stele, telling of answered prayer, with which their walls must have been covered, much as certain churches, such as that of Bonsecours, near Rouen, are lined with similar tablets to the Virgin Mary. If we desire to know what a Roman temple to Hammon was like, we must go to that home of beautiful temples, Thugga (Dougga).

The temple, standing high above the city on a windy headland, faces almost exactly due east, and

<sup>1</sup> That is *Jovi Optimo Maximo*. “To Jupiter, Best and Greatest.”

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* p. 430.

was approached by a pillared vestibule not unlike that which Constantine added to the Basilica of Maxentius in the Forum at Rome. From the vestibule a monumental gateway led into the great court of the temple, surrounded on three sides, to the right, the left, and in front, by a cloister resting on thirty columns. On the ground, between the central columns of the western side, opposite the entrance, are two footprints, carefully chiselled. These were not votive like those found in the Amphitheatre of Carthage, or in the chapel of the Quo Vadis at Rome, but marked the spot where the priest's feet must be placed, that he might catch the first rays of the rising sun, the star of Hammon. On the cornice, surrounding the court, ran a long inscription telling us how Lucius Octavius Victor Roscianus built the temple in the year of the second Tribuniciate and third Consulate of Septimius Severus (A.D. 195).

Beyond the cloister to the west stood three halls, side by side, not unlike the Capitol at Sufetula (Sbeitla). The entrance to the central chamber—the Sanctum Sanctorum—was closed by a grille, or wall, flanked by two little doors, and approached by a couple of steps. The interior was decorated with a huge vine in stucco, the leaves and bunches of grapes of which stood out in bold relief from the walls, reminding us of the golden vine which decorated the great gate of the temple of Jerusalem. At the end, in a niche, stood the god himself, inaccessible and invisible save to the initiate, who only could enter this, his chosen resting-place. The other two chambers were stores, or places where the priests and worshippers could perform the necessary purifications before appearing before the face of god. In one was found a marble statue of the civic type, possibly of Roscianus himself.

The arrangement, as Dr. Carton observes, is interesting because it approximates less to the Western type than to the Eastern, of which the temple at Jerusalem is the best-known example. We are also reminded how careful the Romans were to consult the feelings and prejudices of the natives, even when they adopted and Romanised the Libyan worship. Close to the word "Saturnus" in the inscription round the cloister, a stone has been found, embedded in the wall, giving the name of Hammon; this evidently belonged to the earlier temple, and was placed there by design. In the same way, under the foundations, were discovered some six hundred stele, bearing votive inscriptions and emblems of the Punic god. At the foot of each was found an urn containing the bones of sacrificed animals, a small amphora with pieces of money, and vials of odours.

#### TANITH

More probable is the Libyan origin of the great goddess of Carthage, Tanith. Dr. Bertholon explains the name as "Ta-Neith," "The Neith," and though Egyptian scholars are not inclined to allow his derivation of Hammon from "a-Moun," they are more disposed to accept that which he assigns to the sister goddess.

It is now generally admitted that the original inhabitants of Egypt were Libyans, or, as they are now called, Berbers; and, as the worship of Neith is certainly older than the First Dynasty (4400 B.C.), she may fairly be considered as one of the deities of the country. In confirmation of this, we do not find her worship confined to any one city in Egypt, but established along the whole length of the Nile valley.

The Egyptians associated their principal deities

in triads, or groups of three, like those of Zeus, Here, and Athene at Athens, and Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva at Rome. At Sais, in the delta, the triad consisted of Osiris, Neith, and Horus. Neith, the female element of the godhead, was represented as an armed goddess bearing bow and arrow. For this reason, perhaps, she was identified with Athene; thus Plato says in the *Timæus*:<sup>1</sup> "At the head of the Egyptian delta, where the river Nile divides, there is a certain district which is called the district of Sais, and the great city of the district is also called Sais, and is the city from which Amasis, the king, was sprung. The citizens have a deity who was their foundress: she is called in the Egyptian tongue Neith, and is asserted by them to be the same whom the Hellenes call Athene: they are great lovers of the Athenians, and say that they are in some way related to them." Herodotus (iv. 189) traces other similarities between the Greek and Libyan Athene, and derives from the latter the dress and ægis of the goddess of Athens, as well as some details of her worship.

In addition to her bow and arrows, Neith carries in her left hand the sceptre of a goddess, and in her right the Ankh, the sign of life. On her head she wears the crown of Lower Egypt, and the idiogram for her name was a weaver's shuttle, a device which the Libyans tattooed upon their arms and wove into their clothing.<sup>2</sup> In Egyptian mythology she was called "The Mother of the Gods," especially of the sun god Ra, and so Sais was known as the "Home of the Mother of the Gods." Subsequently her place in the Osirian triad was taken by Isis, the ideal mother, with whom Neith was confused or identified. As the

<sup>1</sup> *Timæus*, xxi. Jowett's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Petrie, *Nagada and Ballas*, p. 64.

sign for the word "mother" or "mut" was a vulture, both Neith and Isis were vulture goddesses, and the latter is represented with vulture wings springing from the hips, which, stretched out in front of the body, formed a shelter for her children.

Far away to the south, in Upper Egypt, the Theban triad consisted of Amon or Hammon, Mut, and Khonsu, and as Mut, the Mother, or the Lady of Heaven or the Sky, was identical with the Neith of Sais, we found her here in close connection with Amon-Ra, "The Husband of his Mother."<sup>1</sup>

In a rainless country like Egypt, gods of the elements hardly entered into the pantheon, but such attributes were, naturally, prominent in the conception of the Libyan goddess. She was the mother of nature, and as Hammon became more and more identified with the sun, so she with the moon, the giver of quickening, fertilising rain, always considered to be the gift of the moon. To some extent these ideas seem to have been connected with another Egyptian goddess, Nut, the Lady of the Sky, with whom Neith has been vaguely connected, but the whole conception was alien to Egyptian thought.

The Romans, for the most part, identified Tanith with Juno, and called her Juno Cœlestis, or Cœlestis only, sometimes with the addition *polliacatrix pluviarum*. In Vergil she appears as Pronuba Juno, the goddess of fruitful marriages. Another title given her in three inscriptions<sup>2</sup> discovered at Fedj Mzala, is "Dea Nutrix," and an inscription on the base of a statue at Lambæsis (Lambessa)<sup>3</sup> is to "Nutrici

<sup>1</sup> Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 104, 111. With this strange title we may compare the dedication of the Certosa at Pavia to the "Virgin, Mother, Daughter, and Wife of God."

<sup>2</sup> C.I.L. viii. 8245-6-7.

<sup>3</sup> C.I.L. viii. 2664.

Exposition Universelle  
Internationale  
de 1889



TANITH (?)

Deæ." Here she holds an infant on her left arm and a loaf of bread in her right hand. Both of these emblems reveal her as the goddess of fertility, "in the fruit of thy body and in the fruit of thy ground."<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be noticed that she was sometimes identified with Demeter or Ceres, mother of Persephone, and of the harvest, and worshipped under that name. It is an early and interesting instance of that almost universal cult of the Mother and Child, which made its way from Egypt to Rome, and thence into the Christian Church,<sup>2</sup> where it bids fair to overshadow, if not eclipse, the worship of the God-man.

On the lid of a large sarcophagus, now in the museum at Carthage, containing the bones of a priestess of Tanith, is carved the figure of the goddess herself.<sup>3</sup> A beautiful woman, grandly modelled, she is clothed with a rose-coloured "garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." The right hand, hanging loosely by her side, holds a dove; the left, bent at the elbow, a vase of offerings. An Egyptian headdress is surmounted by a crown, in

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxviii. 4. For some interesting illustrations of somewhat similar figures of Isis and Horus, v. *Egypt and Israel*, by Flinders Petrie. The girdle of Isis, to which he draws attention (p. 140), reappears in the legend of the Virgin and St. Thomas. Cf. Diod. Sic. iii. 67, 69.

<sup>2</sup> This was in the fifth century, when the worship of Isis, *Regina Cæli*, *Deum Mater*, *Regina Marium*, &c. (v. Apuleius, Met. xi.), was proscribed. For some notes on the attribution of the symbols of Isis to the Virgin Mary, see Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. ii. p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> The sarcophagus belongs to the third or fourth century B.C., and was found in the cemetery of the Rabs or priests, near the Damous el Karita.

The figure is commonly called that of the Priestess, and certainly this is the more natural; moreover, the difference between the goddess and a priestess with the attributes of the goddess is not very wide. On the other hand, according to Dr. Bertholon, the bones found in the sarcophagus are those of an old woman with a projecting lower jaw and, probably, a wide, flat nose. If so, it is difficult to believe that the beautiful carving was seriously meant to represent her.

front of which stands out the head of a vulture. From the hips spring two great vulture wings, which, folded in front of the body, cover all, except the feet, from the waist downwards.

Such, according to the Greek artist who executed the work, was the Libyan goddess Tanith—Greek in the gracious beauty of the face and the nobly harmonious lines of the figure, but Libyan or Egyptian in all the details and attributes. The dove was, however, an emblem of Ashtart and Aphrodite. It is the Vulture, yet kindly mother goddess, Neith, Mut, Nut, or Isis.<sup>1</sup>

That the Carthaginians should connect or associate her with their goddess Ashtart was inevitable; that they did so is certain. In the museum at Carthage is the dedication of a temple to "The Ladies Ashtart and Tanith in Lebanon,"<sup>2</sup> a hill in Carthage; and there is an inscription to Ashtart Tanith; moreover, the rites with which both were worshipped were very similar, but chiefly in those elements which are common to all such primitive religions. On the whole, it would seem that the association was never very close, and that, as the bonds between Carthage and the mother country loosened, Ashtart was forgotten, and the Libyan goddess adored alone.

As by degrees Hammon became more and more a sun god, Tanith became the goddess of the moon, and the curved bull horns of the god were given her to represent the crescent. Sometimes they rest upon

<sup>1</sup> In the British Museum is a small statue of Isis. Her wings, which spring from the hips, are stretched out straight in front of her. Between them stands Osiris un Nefer.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly the site took its name from the temple. At Aphalia in the Lebanon was a Temple of Aphrodite, in which she was worshipped under the name of "Ourania," or "Cœlestis." Cf. Herod. i. 105, and 1 Samuel xxxi. 10.

the sun's disc, sometimes they bend down over it, sometimes they embrace it within their curve. Countless votive stele have been found dedicated to her and Hammon, but she is always put first. "To Rabetna Tanith Peni Baal," they run, and "To Adon Baal Hammon!" Here is one—

"To the Lady Tanith, Face of Baal,  
To the Lord Baal Hammon, vowed by  
Hoballat daughter of Abdmelqart  
Son of Giscon, son of Hannibaal."

Another—

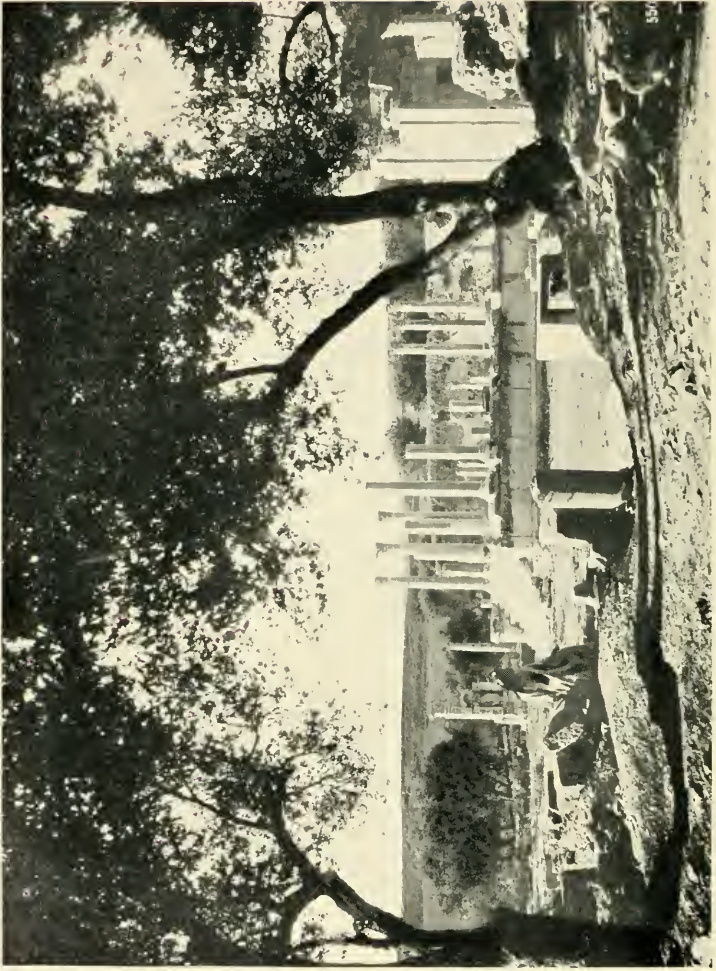
"To the Lady Tanith, Face of Baal,  
To the Lord Baal Hammon, vowed by  
Sofat son of Adonibaal  
The Suffete, son of Hamilcat  
The Suffete, because she has made him hear her voice."

On one stele<sup>1</sup> Tanith is represented as a sheep, and is herself given the title of Adon. Possibly this is a mistake of the mason, or it may tend to show that the goddess was conceived of as androgynous; in this case the almost invariable phrase "Face of Baal" may be connected with the bearded Ashtart, and mean "with a Baal face," "the bearded goddess."

The worship of Tanith was so closely associated with that of Baal Hammon that separate notice is unnecessary. Of her votaresses she demanded the sacrifice of their chastity, or of their hair.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult not to think that we have a trace of the latter alternative when we read that, in the last siege, the

<sup>1</sup> C.I.S. 419. Cf. *Religion of the Semites*, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> At Byblus, in the rites of Adonis (Tammuz), women cut their hair or sold themselves to a stranger, and bought a sacrifice for Aphrodite with the price of their honour. In Babylonian and Assyrian mythology, Ishtar (Ashtart), the goddess of fertility, visits the underworld to win the healing waters which shall revive Tammuz, the sun. Possibly it was in this way that Ishtar became identified with the moon. Cf. Ez. viii. 13.



TEMPLE OF CELESTIS, DOUGGA

Cross of Constantine, from its resemblance to the first two Greek letters of the name of Christ; and so it lives on, as the sign of Tanith in Africa, and of Life in Egypt, on the breasts of Berber women and on the covers of Christian prayer-books.<sup>1</sup>

The form, nay, the very site, of her temple, Punic or Roman, at Carthage is unknown, though the discovery of an enormous number of votive stele between Byrsa and the sea seems to indicate its neighbourhood. To know what the latter temple was like, we must travel again to Thugga (Dougga).

The Temple of Cœlestis there, as elsewhere, faced due south, that so the beams of the Star of Hammon might lighten the darkness of the shrine of her who was his face at their highest and brightest. In front, raised upon a vaulted crypt, was a vestibule, probably not unlike that in front of the Temple of Saturn. Behind this lay a broad paved court, into which two lateral doors led from the city. Outside the eastern entrance, which led to the Forum, was a large chamber for ablutions, resembling the Mida which we find in the modern mosque. A beautiful semicircular colonnade, ending in two lovely little *Ædiculæ*, and shut in by an outer wall, but open towards the temple, recalled the crescent emblem of the goddess. The frieze, resting on twenty pillars, carried a long inscription of the usual type, telling us that the temple was built in honour of the "Dea Cœlestis" by Julius Venustus Gabinus and Julia Gabinia Venusta between the years A.D. 222 and 225.

Resting on the frieze, and crowning each column,

<sup>1</sup> In the plate "Signs and Symbols," 36 and 37 are Hatchets; 38, 39, 40, Taniths; 41, the Ankh; 42, the Labarum; 43, an ordinary Tanith brooch; 46, a Punic jewel; 37 was found in Sardinia, and is now in the British Museum.

was a statue of some town or province. The names of some of these can still be read : Thugga, Karthago, Laodicea, Mesopotamia, Syria, Judæa, Dalmatia, but not enough to show on what principles, or for what reasons, they were selected.

The hallowed precinct within the colonnade was planted with a sacred grove, in the midst of which, in all its graceful beauty, stood the Cella of the temple itself. A flight of eight steps led up to the portico or Pronaos, consisting of three rows of columns, six in the front row and four in each of the other rows ; an arcade of similar, detached pillars ran round the Cella,<sup>1</sup> in which stood the goddess herself. Even in ruins, as we see it now, but still surrounded by its olive grove, it is one of the most lovely of the temples of North Africa, second only to the Capitol which stood hard by.

Such were the gods of Carthage, and such, at least in outline, the rites with which they were worshipped.

Of the Punic temples in which these rites were celebrated we know nothing, save that the one was suited to the other. In *Salambo*, Flaubert has given an elaborate description of the Temple of Tanith and its obscene inhabitants. It is purely imaginary. It is not likely—nay, it is hardly conceivable—that it should be true.

His horrible picture of the great sacrifice to Hammon is probably much nearer the truth. How shall we imagine the temple of this god ? A huge enclosure planted with a grove of trees ; set thick with votive tablets and stele ; altars for burnt offerings ; a huge brazen image of the god, in which, or on the arms of which, the unhappy victims could be roasted alive ; in front of it a horrible furnace pit, into which the

<sup>1</sup> Technically the temple was hexastyle, peripteral, stylobate.

wretched victims rolled off the brazen arms of the god;<sup>1</sup> such there were; whether there was much more may well be doubted.

The beautiful temples we have described came three hundred years after the days of Punic Carthage were over. Though dedicated to Libyan deities, it was under Roman names and Roman attributes; in short, they are essentially Roman temples, fitted only for Roman worship of Roman gods. The obscene and inhuman abominations of the old worship would have been impossible in their narrow precincts, even if they had been in harmony with Arian conceptions of what God requires of men "to tread His courts."

<sup>1</sup> The idea seems to have been that, in this way, the victim was delivered alive to the god, and that the responsibility for the death rested upon him.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SWORD AND THE TRIDENT, 264-201 B.C.

WHEN, in the year 264 B.C., Carthage first came into armed collision with Rome, she had been for nearly two hundred years the Queen of the Mediterranean, dominant in the East, so supreme in the West that her ambassadors told the Romans that they might not even wash their hands in the sea without leave from Carthage. A naval power only, she had never sought for other empire than that of the sea, but that had been hers so completely and so long, that she had learnt to consider it hers almost by a law of nature. Just as now, wherever the traveller round the world finds a piece of land worth having, he finds the English flag waving over it, so was it then in the Mediterranean, the central sea of the ancient world. The south of Spain owed allegiance to Carthage; North Africa was fringed with her factories or emporia; the west of Sicily, Sardinia, Malta, the Balearic Islands, accepted her rule. With Greece she had settled her accounts, with Rome she had a treaty.<sup>1</sup> And so, sitting like a queen, like Tyrus before her, in the midst of the seas, with the wealth of the world pouring into her lap, it is little wonder that "her heart was lifted up because of her beauty, and she set her heart as the heart of God."

But, for all this fair show, the foundations of her

<sup>1</sup> This treaty went back to the foundation of the Republic of Rome. It throws back the commercial greatness of Carthage farther than we are accustomed to put it.

supremacy were rotten, for it rested upon her sea power only. When she needed troops, Carthage had to trust to the chance friendship of the warlike and barbarous tribes which surrounded her, and to the very uncertain loyalty of a mercenary army. When Hamilcar Barcas landed in Spain at the beginning of the Second Punic War, it is said that, with the exception of a General Staff of officers, he had not a single Carthaginian soldier in the ranks. It was by his disgraceful betrayal of his Libyan troops, in 358 B.C., that Himilco gave occasion for the phrase "*Punica Fides*," which clung to Carthage for ever after ; while on their return from the First Punic War, the army of Hamilcar mutinied and, for three years, engaged Carthage in the Mercenary War of which Flaubert has given so lurid an account in *Salambo*.

Meanwhile, across the narrow seas which divide Africa from Europe, a hardy and strenuous race was being built up into a nation, welded together by blood and iron. Every man was by instinct and necessity a soldier, and inspired by a spirit of patriotism which made him cheerfully recognise and accept universal service as a national duty. Conquered Etruria had done much to civilise her rough conquerors : she had given them laws, religion, architecture—everything, indeed, but language. The rich plains of Cisalpine Gaul (Lombardy) had been occupied, and South Italy annexed. And now Rome, looking across the narrow strait from Scylla to Charybdis, claimed Sicily as a natural and necessary portion of her inheritance.

So long as Carthage confined herself to the extreme west of the island, to Drepanun (Trapani) and Panormos (Palermo),<sup>1</sup> and Greece was content with her foot-

<sup>1</sup> It is strange, but the Phœnician name of Palermo is not known ; "Panormos" is Greek, and means the "All-Harbour."

hold at Syracuse, there was no occasion for any actual collision ; but there was not room in the little island for the intrusion of a third power. In 265 B.C., Rome made her first advance by receiving all Sicilian Italians into the Italian Confederacy. In the following year Carthage replied by occupying Messina (Messina); Caius Claudius then landed, surprised and took prisoner the Carthaginian Admiral Hanno, and retook Messina. At this the Carthaginians declared war, prefacing it, according to their custom, by the execution of the unfortunate admiral, "pour encourager les autres." Thus began the momentous struggle between the whale and the elephant, which was fated to last for one hundred and twenty years and to end in the annihilation of the city of Elissar.

It was inevitable that, in its first stages, the war should be naval and its issues determined, not on the land, but at sea ; and the Carthaginian fleet was overwhelmingly the strongest. Hitherto it had consisted of triremes, or galleys with three banks of oars, each manned by ten soldiers and one hundred and thirty rowers, slaves who never left the benches to which they were chained. This horribly cruel discipline secured for Carthage two advantages of vital importance : she could mobilise at a moment's notice, and her crews, kept in a state of constant and severe exercise and training, could be relied upon to carry out those tactics of manœuvring, ramming, and sinking the enemy's ships on which, and not on hand-to-hand fighting, Carthage relied for victory.

But in addition to the trireme, she had recently learnt to build a much larger class of vessels, *Penteres*, or *quinqueremes*, with five banks of oars, which occupied towards the trireme very much the same position as that taken by the Dreadnought towards the old

line-of-battle ship. Each of these was manned by about twenty soldiers and three hundred rowers.

This new departure was the salvation of Rome, for it practically put the triremes, in which the great superiority of Carthage lay, out of the fighting line. Recognising that the smaller vessels were hopelessly outclassed by the larger, the Romans made no effort to make up their deficiency in triremes, but, taking a stranded Carthaginian ship as a model, concentrated all their energies on the building of a hundred quinqueremes. In addition to this, realising that they were soldiers attacking sailors, they determined to make a naval battle as like a land battle as possible. For this purpose they placed on the prow of each vessel a flying bridge, and, to the crew of three hundred sailors, they added a complement of one hundred and twenty legionaries, or marines. So soon as a Punic vessel approached and tried to ram, the heavy bridge, armed with a sharp spike or hook, which gave its name of *Corvus* to the whole engine, was dropped on the deck, and the legionaries swarmed over and boarded her.<sup>1</sup>

The first enterprise ended in failure. In 260 B.C. the fleet was launched, and C. Cornelius Scipio, with a squadron of seventeen ships, tried to take Lipara. The Carthaginians overpowered him and captured the entire fleet.

The command was then entrusted to C. Duilius,

<sup>1</sup> The description of the *Corvus* given by Polybius is minute but not clear. In the prow of the vessel was erected a mast, twenty-four feet high, with a pulley at the top. To this mast was attached by a ring, a gangway, thirty-six feet long and four wide, with a railing on each side as high as a man's knee. At the end was an iron spike. As the enemy drew near, the whole was hoisted to the top of the mast, so as to clear the bulwarks, and dropped on to the opponent's deck. If the ships lay side by side, the soldiers boarded where they chose; if they were prow to prow, the men passed, two abreast, by the gangway.

and in a battle fought off Mylœ, near Palermo, fifty Carthaginian vessels, nearly half the fleet, were captured or sunk, largely by means of the terrible flying bridges. Duilius was awarded a triumph, and the strange honour of having a flute-player to escort him home from dinner. A Columna Rostrata—the first of its kind—was erected in the Forum and adorned with the beaks of the Carthaginian vessels.

Four years later, 256 B.C., the Romans felt themselves strong enough, by sea as well as by land, boldly to carry the war into the enemy's country. A fleet of three hundred and thirty sail, carrying forty thousand soldiers, in addition to their complement of one hundred thousand rowers, was despatched for Carthage, under the command of the Consul, Marcus Atilius Regulus. Off Mount Ecnomus (Licata), which thrusts its huge bulk out into the sea thirty miles east of Agrigentum (Girgenti), they encountered the yet stronger fleet of Carthage. In the battle which ensued, not less than three hundred thousand men were engaged. The result was disastrous to Carthage; she lost ninety-four ships, and the Romans, although their losses were equally severe, achieved their purpose, and were able to pass on unhindered and effect a landing at Clypea (Kilibia), on the eastern shore of the promontory of Cape Bon, while the Carthaginian fleet, crippled but not put out of action, was awaiting them in the home waters to the west. Their coming was a signal for a general rising of the native tribes.

For a time the success of Regulus was brilliant and complete. Driving the armies of Carthage before him, he pushed his way victoriously round the gulf of Tunis, took the city of Tunis, and menaced Carthage herself.

Then came one of those sudden outbursts of enthusiastic heroism of which, under the stress of pressing danger, the Carthaginians, like all Oriental nations, showed themselves from time to time capable.

From Sparta they invoked the aid of the renowned General Xanthippus, and, under his leadership, Regulus was totally defeated, his army, with the exception of some two thousand men, exterminated, and himself taken prisoner, 255 B.C. Nor was this all, for a Roman fleet sent to his assistance perished in a storm on the coast of Sicily, off Pachynus (Cape Passaro); and the Carthaginians, safe for the moment from foreign attack, were at liberty to settle matters at home. The rebellious tribes were subdued, and their sheiks, to the number of three thousand, crucified. It was the ordinary Carthaginian method of keeping up discipline or restoring order.

The scene of war then shifted finally to Sicily. Taking advantage of the defeat by land, and loss of ships by sea, which the Romans had suffered, the Carthaginians attacked and recaptured Agrigentum (Girgenti), and, in the following year, Drepanum (Trapani) also, of which the Romans had made themselves masters.

The war centred round Panormos (Palermo), the strongest city, with the finest harbour, on the north coast of Sicily. The city lies at the head of a little bay, from which the beautifully fertile valley of the Concha d'Oro (the Golden Shell) stretches inland, under the shelter of the hills now crowned with the glorious church of Monreale.

To the west the town and harbour <sup>1</sup> are sheltered and protected by the huge shoulder of Ercte (Monte Pellegrino), which was then connected with the main-

<sup>1</sup> The original harbour is completely silted up.

land only by a narrow isthmus. Here the Carthaginians entrenched themselves, and the Romans, although they blockaded the city and soon starved it into surrender, were unable to dislodge them.

The year <sup>3</sup>351 B.C. was the turning-point of the war. After receiving strong reinforcements from Africa, the Carthaginians made a determined effort to recover the city. In this endeavour they were foiled and utterly defeated, and the triumph accorded to the Roman general, L. Cœcilius Metellus, was adorned with their elephants. The Carthaginian commander, Hasdrubal, escaped to Carthage, only to suffer there the death which was the ordinary fate of the defeated.

The Carthaginians now sued for peace and an exchange of prisoners. In hope of securing more favourable terms from the Romans, they sent Regulus to plead for them. But they had mistaken their man. Refusing to enter the Senate, or even Rome, he told the Senators who were sent to confer with him, that men who had allowed themselves to be taken prisoners were worthless and did not deserve ransom, and exhorted the Romans to grant no terms of peace, but to press the war to the bitter end. Then, taking leave of his friends and family, he returned calmly to Carthage, in accordance with his promise, to face the unspeakable torture prepared for him.<sup>1</sup>

This happened in the year 250 B.C. Three years later, in 247 B.C., Hannibal was born.

For nine years longer the war in Sicily was continued by the genius of Hamilcar Barcas,<sup>2</sup> who now appears on the scene for the first time as a young

<sup>1</sup> The scene inspired Horace (*Carm.* iii. 5) with some of the noblest verses he ever wrote. The truth of the story is very doubtful.

<sup>2</sup> Barcas = Barak = Lightning.

man of about twenty years of age. In 247 B.C., with a small force of raw, half-savage mercenaries, he seized Ercte (Monte Pellegrino), and for three years baffled all the efforts of the Romans to dislodge him. He then, 244 B.C., moved with troops which had now become a formidable army, to the relief of Drepanum (Trapani), which was closely blockaded by the Romans. Seizing the town of Eryx, on the mountain of the same name, he entrenched himself there, and by means of his fleet established communications with the beleaguered town. Had he been adequately supported by Carthage, he might have made, by sea, that attack upon Rome herself which his son was obliged to attempt by the long and arduous overland march from Spain. For two years longer he maintained himself on his mountain fastness.

Then came the end. In 242 B.C., the Romans despatched an overwhelming fleet under the Consul Gaius Lutatius Catulus. He himself was wounded in an engagement off Syracuse, but on March 10 of the following year his Prætor, Publius Valerius Catulus, forced the Carthaginian fleet which had been sent to relieve Drepanum to accept battle off the island of Ægusa (Favignano), and won a brilliant and decisive victory which rendered the cause of Carthage in Sicily desperate. After crucifying their defeated admiral, the Carthaginians sent orders to Hamilcar to make peace on the best terms he could get. By these conditions they were compelled to evacuate Sicily, to surrender to Rome all the islands between Sicily and Africa, and to pay a war indemnity of three thousand two hundred talents (£800,000) in ten years.

Another condition was that Hamilcar and his army should pass under the yoke. This Hamilcar

flatly refused to do. The matter was not pressed, and he marched out with all the honours of war.<sup>1</sup>

Three years later, taking advantage of the domestic troubles of Carthage, the Romans seized Sardinia also, at the invitation of the Sardinians.

Thus ended the First Punic War, in the year 241 B.C.

But peace with Rome did not bring tranquillity to Carthage.

The peace party was now in the ascendant there, and when Hamilcar landed with his twenty thousand mercenaries, his command was taken from him and given to his bitter enemy Hanno. While holding Eryx, Hamilcar had been unable to pay his troops, and long arrears were due to them. These arrears Hanno refused to pay. A furious mutiny at once broke out, headed by Spendius, a fugitive slave from Campania, and Matho, an African who had distinguished himself greatly in the war. As usual, the mutineers were at once joined by the neighbouring tribes, and a war broke out which lasted for three years, and brought Carthage more than once to the brink of destruction. Through the incapacity of Hanno, defeat and disaster followed one another in rapid succession. Tunis was taken, and Carthage itself attacked. At last Hanno was superseded, and the command restored to Hamilcar. The magic of his genius and his well-known character for probity brought many of the mutineers back to their duty, and enabled him to secure the aid of the Numidian sheiks, and so threaten the enemy in front and rear. Tunis was retaken, Matho utterly defeated, and his army, to the number, it is said, of forty thousand,

<sup>1</sup> He had, however, to pay a ransom of eighteen denarii (twelve shillings) per head for his men.

driven back into the mountains and hemmed in a defile known by the name of the Hatchet, to the east of Bou Kornein. Seeing that success or even escape was hopeless, Spendius now tried to come to terms. With nine others of the principal leaders of the mutiny, he met Hamilcar. They were received with the utmost courtesy; the only condition Hamilcar made was that ten men whom he should name should be surrendered to him. Astonished at such clemency, they at once consented. "Then I name you," was the reply, and they were at once seized and sent to Carthage.

In despair the mutineers prepared for a desperate resistance. When their supplies were exhausted, it is said that they ate their prisoners. At last, worn out with fatigue and starvation, they could hold out no longer, and were trampled to death beneath the feet of Hamilcar's elephants.

Thus, in the year 238 B.C., ended the War of the Mercenaries, known as the Truceless War.

The First Punic War, or, as the Romans called it, the Sicilian War, had ended inconclusively. For twenty-three years it had dragged on, with varying success, but, on the whole, greatly to the disadvantage of Carthage. Sicily, Sardinia, and Malta were lost to her, and the Mediterranean was no longer a Carthaginian lake, a *mare clausum*, as she had striven to make it.

This was much, but the moral results in the loss of prestige were much more serious and far-reaching. Rome had learnt two lessons—that it was not enough for the one mailed fist to wield the Trident, unless the other grasped the Sword; and, further, that the hold of Carthage on that Trident was not so firm but that it might be wrung from her. She had pricked the bubble of Punic supremacy at sea. She had done

what Blake did for England when he formed her first navy, marched his soldiers on board, and swept Van Tromp and the invincible Dutch from the sea. She had learnt that she need not fear to meet even the terrible sea-captains of Carthage on even terms. The glamour of fear of Carthage, which rested on all who haunted the sea, was gone for ever.

A peace made after so inconclusive a war could be little more than a truce, and the breathing-space was short. In 238 B.C., Hamilcar Barcas, fresh from his tremendous vengeance on the Mercenaries,<sup>1</sup> landed in Spain. His business was to thwart Roman enterprise in the peninsula, and to build up there an empire which should compensate Carthage for what she had lost elsewhere. With him he took his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, and his little son Hannibal, a boy of nine years old, who had just taken, at the altar of God, the oath of undying hatred of Rome which he so faithfully kept. "When my father, Hamilcar," so he said to Antiochus long afterwards, "was setting out for the war in Spain, he called me to him and bade me lay my hand on the sacrifice and swear before the altar that I would never make peace with Rome (*nunquam esse in amicitia cum Romanis*). I took that vow, and have kept it."<sup>2</sup>

In nine years Hamilcar had subdued all south of the Tagus; then he fell in battle (229 B.C.). His son-in-law, Hasdrubal, took his place, and continued his course of conquest with little effectual opposition from the Romans, who were hampered by the invasion of the Gauls. Eight years after the death of Hamilcar, after founding New Carthage (Carthagera) and sub-

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say, "on the natives who had joined the Mercenaries."

<sup>2</sup> Polyb. iii. 11.

duing all the country south of the Ebro, Hasdrubal was murdered (321 B.C.) and the command passed into the hands of Hannibal, now a young man of twenty-six—one of the two or three men of supreme military and administrative genius that the world has seen.

Unable to deny his greatness as a soldier and leader of men, the Roman historians have striven to belittle him by accusing him of savage cruelty and a more than Punic perfidy. To establish the latter charge they have been able to produce no evidence whatever. Of cruelty they adduce one instance: After the battle of Cannæ, some young Roman prisoners were set—no unusual thing—to fight against one another, the survivors being promised their freedom; on their refusal to fight they were all put to death with torture. But such barbarity seems to have been exceptional. As a rule, Hannibal's treatment of his prisoners was not marked by unnecessary rigour, while, in his respect for the dead, his conduct contrasts very favourably with that of the Romans themselves. The best witness to his genius and to his personality is that he never lost a battle in all his long Italian campaign, and that, although his army was a mixed multitude of barbarians of all nations and languages, and had been fighting, without rest, for sixteen years, they never failed him or murmured, and he never had to quell a mutiny.<sup>1</sup>

Recognising that, if Rome was to be conquered, he must strike at the heart, Hannibal determined to force on a new war. For this purpose he attacked

<sup>1</sup> Two criticisms have been passed upon Hannibal's strategy; that he did not keep up his lines of communication, and that he did not press home his successes. If the view taken in the text, that he considered Carthage as his base, be correct, the blame for the former error should rest on her rather than on him. The second criticism seems to be just. His tactics are generally recognised as faultless.

Saguntum, 219 B.C., a city which, though south of the Ebro, and therefore within the sphere of Punic occupation, was in close alliance with Rome. When ambassadors arrived from Rome to complain, he coldly referred them to Carthage, and, continuing his operations, took and sacked the town. Arrived at Carthage, the envoys found that, after nearly twenty years of peace and of careful husbanding of their resources, the temper of the Pœni was changed, and they were now as eager for war as once they had been clamorous for peace. Unable to obtain satisfaction, the Roman envoy gathered his toga into a fold and said, "Here we bring you peace or war—take which you please." "Give us whichever you like," was the answer. "Then take war." "We accept it gratefully." Thus in the year 218 B.C., began the Second Punic War.

Hannibal's plan of campaign was as simple as it was daring. To transfer the seat of war to Italy; to raise the country, only half subdued and wholly unreconciled to the yoke of Rome; to attack Rome herself if possible; if not, to push on to the south and join hands with Carthage across the narrow seas between South Italy and Africa.

So audacious a plan depended for its success upon the rapidity with which it was carried out. The command in Spain he entrusted to his brother, Hasdrubal Barcas, and left with him the entire fleet and fifteen thousand soldiers. Late in May, 218 B.C., he left Carthagena with an army of ninety thousand men, and pressed forward to the north. Overleaping the Pyrenees, he evaded the Roman Consul, Cn. Scipio, who was watching the mouth of the Rhone, by crossing the river higher up, near its confluence with the Isere. Having secured the friendship of the Gauls, he pushed on unhindered to the foot of the

Alps. Late in the autumn, in spite of the frost and snow and of the ceaseless attacks of the barbarians who hung like wolves upon his flanks, he "forced," to use Napoleon's<sup>1</sup> word, the pass of the Great St. Bernard, cutting his way through the snow-drifts and splitting, so we are told, the rocks with vinegar. It was the greatest military achievement of his great career, but it cost him dear. Two-thirds of the army, and all his elephants save one,<sup>2</sup> were left behind in the awful passes.

Descending into Italy, he found Scipio, who had crossed from Spain by sea, waiting to intercept him. Advancing along the left bank of the Po, he encountered him on the Ticinus, and the war opened with a cavalry skirmish, in which the Romans suffered heavily. Scipio himself was wounded, and was only saved from death by his young son Publius, the future Africanus. A dramatic incident indeed, if it be true, for the two men were not to meet again until they stood face to face at Zama.

Giving the enemy no time to recover, Hannibal pressed on, fell heavily upon the other Consul, Sempronius, on the Trebia and defeated him also utterly. Then as the autumn was over, he went into winter quarters among the Ligurian Gauls. It was then, in the swamps of the Po, that he contracted the ophthalmia which cost him an eye.

In the following spring, Hannibal left his quarters, gave the Consul Flaminius the slip at Arretium (Arezzo), ambushed him on the Lake Thrasimene, annihilated his army, and Rome lay, apparently, at his mercy.

Then, if ever, the gods fought for Rome, and she

<sup>1</sup> "Hannibal forced the Alps—I turned them."

<sup>2</sup> This, we are told, he kept for his own riding :

"Quum Getula ducem portaret bellua luscum."—Juv. x. 158.

saw her terrible enemy pass without venturing to attack, with much the same feelings as, on the great day of England's deliverance from Spain,<sup>1</sup> Drake and Hawkins watched the Invincible Armada pass St. Helen's, and knew that Spain had lost her chance, and England was saved. As he passed, the Dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus, known as Cunctator,<sup>2</sup> with a new army closed in on his rear; for every Roman was a soldier. At Cannæ (August 2, 216 B.C.) the lion turned furiously upon the wolves and rent them with a carnage that was never forgotten or forgiven; seventy thousand out of an army of seventy-six thousand perished in the awful slaughter. But the Senate, never grander than on that day of deadly peril, merely thanked the defeated Consul, Terentius Varro, a plebeian and their political enemy, for not despairing of the Republic, and prepared for fresh efforts. Carthage would have crucified him.<sup>3</sup>

Again the road to Rome was open, and Maharbal, the ablest of Hannibal's lieutenants, begged to be allowed to advance at once with the cavalry. "They shall know that I have come before they know that I am coming; within five days you shall be feasting on the Capitol." But permission was refused. "Hannibal," said Maharbal, "you know how to win victories, but not how to use them."<sup>4</sup>

The parallel of the Armada is curiously true in another detail. Medina Sidonia did not dare attempt to land without reinforcements, and so pressed on to

<sup>1</sup> August 4, A.D. 1588.

<sup>2</sup> "Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem."—Ennius (quoted by Vergil).

<sup>3</sup> The aristocratic Consul, Æmilius Paulus, refused battle, but the Consuls commanded on alternate days, and Varro accepted. Paulus was amongst the killed.

<sup>4</sup> "Ut prius venisse quam venturum sciant."

"Vincere scis, Hannibal, victoriâ uti nescis."—Livy, xxii. 51.

Calais, only to find that since the death of Mary Stuart France had changed her mind, and no help was ready for him ; so was it now with Hannibal. For thirteen years (216–203 B.C.) he held his ground in South Italy, never defeated, it is true, but winning useless victories, with a dwindling army, and always looking in vain for help from Carthage which never came. Capua was his Khartoum.

Once (B.C. 212) he marched on Rome, hoping to draw off the Roman force which was besieging Capua. In his camp on the Anio, three miles from the city, Hannibal was told how the place where his feet stood had been bought for its full value in open market, just as Jeremiah purchased the field of Hananiah in Anathoth when the Assyrians were encamped there. But the tide had turned. "God once gave me the chance of taking the city, but not the will ; now I have the will, but not the chance."<sup>1</sup> He made a futile demonstration against the Capuan Gate and retired.

Once, also, his brother Hasdrubal made an effort to relieve him (208–7 B.C.), and advanced from Spain into Italy ; but the despatches telling of his approach fell into the hands of the Consul Nero. Forsaking his duty of watching Hannibal, and marching day and night, he joined the other Consul Livius on the Metaurus, gave instant battle to Hasdrubal, defeated and killed him, hurried back and flung his head into the camp of Hannibal as, to use Danton's tremendous words, Rome's "gage of battle." Hannibal realised that the last hope of Carthage had died with his brother.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Modo mentem non dari, modo fortunam."—Livy, xxvi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> "Occidit, occidit  
Spes omnis et Fortuna nostri  
Nominis Hasdrubale interempto."—Hor., *Carm.* iv. 4.

Meanwhile Rome was not content merely to keep Hannibal at bay. What the Carthaginians could attempt in Italy, that P. Scipio undertook to do in Africa.

Elected as *Ædile* in 212 B.C., he was sent two years later as general to Spain. There his masterly strategy enabled him to take Carthagera and defeat the incompetent generals who had succeeded Hasdrubal; while his firm and generous policy, and, above all, his absolute good faith, gave him unbounded influence over the native chiefs. By the year 207 B.C., little remained in the hands of Carthage save Gades (Cadiz). Passing over into Africa, Scipio visited Syphax, King of the Massesylans, at Cirta, and sought to win his alliance for Rome. It is said that he there met Hasdrubal Giscon, whom he had defeated in Spain, and that the two noble enemies parted with mutual respect and liking. The hand of Sophonisba, the beautiful daughter of Hasdrubal, kept Syphax faithful to Carthage, but cost her the allegiance of Masinissa, the great Numidian chieftain, to whom, it is said, Sophonisba had been betrothed. Scipio returned to Spain, in part thwarted, but with a new ally, who was thenceforward to prove himself the faithful and indomitable friend of Rome. During his absence in Africa a serious insurrection and mutiny had broken out in Spain, but Scipio speedily crushed both, drove the Carthaginians out of their last stronghold at Gades, and returned to Rome, where, in 206 B.C., in spite of being under the legal age, he was elected Consul by the unanimous voice of the people. When his term of office was expired, he chose Sicily as his province (206 B.C.), and at once prepared to carry the war into Africa.

With the exception of Cæsar, Scipio was the greatest

general and citizen that Rome ever gave birth to. In military genius a worthy rival of Hannibal, he was in personal character gentle and unassuming, loyal to his friends, generous to his enemies, of unimpeachable integrity, cultured and refined. It was well for Rome that, at the great crisis of her history, she had such a son to guide her counsels and command her armies.

And now the weakness of Carthage was revealed indeed. Crossing over into Africa, Scipio wintered at Utica, where he was joined by Masinissa. Syphax, in the meantime, was playing a double game. In reality the influence of Sophonisba kept him faithful to Carthage, and his army was practically supporting hers. Nominally, however, he was acting as intermediary between the two enemies, and there was, at least, a truce between him and Scipio. This truce Scipio was persuaded by Masinissa to violate. Dividing his army into two divisions, one under himself and one under Masinissa, he made a simultaneous night attack upon the camps of Syphax and Hasdrubal, and burnt them both. Two decisive battles followed. Syphax was utterly defeated and taken prisoner, and the Carthaginians were driven back in confusion on their base. The victory was complete, but the whole transaction rests as a blot, the only one, on the scutcheon of Scipio's honour.<sup>1</sup>

Cirta and the whole kingdom of Syphax were given to Masinissa; Carthage was invested and sued for peace. Terms of almost incredible moderation were imposed by Scipio. The *status quo* was to be accepted; Spain, already lost, and the Balearic Islands were to be formally ceded to Rome, Masinissa was to be recognised and left undisturbed at Cirta;

<sup>1</sup> Syphax died in captivity before the triumph of Scipio. For the fate of Sophonisba, see Part II., Chapter III.

all vessels of war, save ten, were to be surrendered, a war indemnity of five thousand talents (£1,000,000) was to be paid ; all prisoners and deserters were to be delivered up.

These terms were formally accepted by the Carthaginian envoys and a truce declared, while the consent of the respective governments was being obtained.

Too late, Carthage repented of her desertion of the one man who might have saved her. Hannibal and his brother Magon were recalled. For three years, 205-3 B.C., Magon had been fighting in North Italy, striving in vain to effect a junction with his brother in the south, or at least to create a diversion. He had taken Genoa, but in a battle near Milan he had been seriously wounded, and although he obeyed the summons of Carthage, he died on the voyage.

After killing such of his Italian soldiers as refused to accompany him, Hannibal also obeyed ; the Romans were too glad to see the last of their unconquerable enemy, to do anything to hinder his departure. The Senate celebrated the event by presenting a wreath of grass, the highest honour they could accord to any man, to Quintus Fabius Cunctator, now an old man of ninety years, the only man who had passed through those awful years of peril with credit. Fabius died in the same year.

And so, after thirty years of splendid service, Hannibal returned to the ungrateful country which had forsaken and ruined him. Weary and worn with service, maimed—for, like Nelson, he had lost an eye in the swamps of the Upper Po—his spirit crushed by disappointed hopes, and the strain of the long agony he had endured, he landed at Leptis with the shattered remains of his invincible army.

For the moment the spirits and hopes of the

Carthaginians revived. They repudiated the terms of peace which they had just accepted; a Roman transport fleet was treacherously attacked and plundered, and a warship, with the Roman envoys on board, was seized. But it was hoping against hope. Hannibal's army consisted chiefly of raw levies, his elephants were wild brutes untrained for war, and more dangerous to friend than foe. With such materials even his genius was unable to cope with the seasoned soldiers of Rome, led by such a general as Scipio. The issue could not be doubtful.<sup>1</sup> In the spring of 202 B.C., the two great commanders who had parted on the Ticinus met again at Zama, near Sicca Veneria (Kef), "five days' march west of Carthage."<sup>2</sup> The defeat of Hannibal was utter and complete. With a handful of followers he made his way to Hadrumetum, and so to Carthage, and advised the citizens to make the best terms they could with the exasperated Romans.

These terms were naturally harder than the former. In addition to these, the Carthaginians were to pay an annual tribute of two hundred talents (£48,000) for fifty years; they were not to wage war outside Africa, and, in Africa, they were not to advance beyond their own territory, or make war without the permission of Rome, or on the allies of Rome.

By Hannibal's advice these terms were accepted. Scipio returned in triumph to Rome, and for a time the land had rest.

Thus ended the Second Punic War. It had lasted seventeen years, from 218–201 B.C.

<sup>1</sup> A dramatic story is told by Polybius of an interview between the two generals at Naragara; it was not, however, found possible to come to terms (Polyb. xv. 5).

<sup>2</sup> Polyb. xv. 5. The site of Zama is unknown.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MAILED FIST, 201-146 B.C.

THE position of Carthage was humiliating, almost intolerable, but not desperate. Hannibal was still alive and soon proved himself not less able as a reformer and administrator than he had formerly shown himself as a general. Under his stern and impartial rule justice was once more dispensed, the revenue was honestly collected, abuses repressed, the finances reorganised, and the laws enforced. The heavy war indemnity laid upon Carthage by the Senate was paid off in less than half the time allowed, and generally the recovery of Carthage was so rapid as to arouse once more the jealous fears of Rome. Owing to her matchless position and great traditions, her trade and population, and with these her wealth and importance, increased by leaps and bounds. To Rome, the very existence of Carthage seemed a constant threat. She had never considered the conditions of peace sufficiently onerous; now she became alarmed, and although Hannibal had always honourably observed the terms of peace, the Senate demanded that he should be dismissed and surrendered to them. Carthage was utterly unable to refuse, and so, to save himself, Hannibal fled from the city he had served only too well, and disappears from our sight.

Meanwhile Carthage had other troubles, even more pressing and immediate, to deal with. Masinissa, restored to his kingdom at Cirta (Constantine), found in the weakness of his enemy, an excellent opportunity

for paying off old scores and enlarging his borders at her expense. In 160 B.C. he seized the province of Emporia, on the Lesser Syrtes, and when Carthage appealed to Rome, the commissioners sent to deal with the matter not only confirmed him in possession of the territory he had seized, but ordered Carthage to pay him five hundred talents (£120,000) in addition.

Encouraged by this, Masinissa proceeded, 157 B.C., to seize Tusca and the fertile plains watered by the Bagradas. Again Carthage appealed to Rome, and a second commission was sent, not to arbitrate, but to adjudicate. When Carthage demanded that, as matter of simple justice, the question of her legal right to the territory should be inquired into, the commissioners at once returned to Rome and reported the contumacy of the hated town. The chairman of the commission was Marcus Cato, and so impressed was he by what he saw of the wealth and prosperity of Carthage, that he made the destruction of the city the single aim of his policy. We are told that, from the time of his return, he ended every speech he made with the words, *Delenda est Carthago*, "Carthage must be blotted out," and the cry was taken up by Scipio Nasica, a near relative of Africanus. One day Cato brought into the Senate a basket full of ripe figs which had come from Carthage, to remind the Senators how near, within three days' journey, the dreaded rival was.

At last the continual and unprovoked aggressions of Masinissa, and the refusal of Rome to interfere, or even abide by the conditions of peace, compelled Carthage to arm in self-defence. Masinissa reported this to Rome, referred the whole matter to the Senate, and continued his attacks. The battle which ensued,

151 B.C., was witnessed by a young military tribune who had been sent from Spain to collect elephants for the army. He was grandson of Æmilius Paulus, but upon being adopted into the family of the Scipios by his uncle, the eldest son of Africanus, he had taken their name, by which he is always known. He saw the shock of battle, he saw Masinissa, now an old man of eighty-eight years, vault upon his bare-backed steed and charge at the head of the matchless Numidian cavalry, and was delighted with the sight. Nobody but the gods in heaven, he wrote home, had ever seen anything so beautiful.

In spite of his defeat, Hasdrubal continued the war, but at last, his army wasted with disease and famine, he was compelled to accept whatever terms Masinissa chose to offer him. One of these was that the army should pass through the enemy's camp unarmed, and the men with but one garment apiece. As they went, they were treacherously attacked and massacred; only a few, including Hasdrubal himself, escaped to tell the tale in Carthage.

But Hasdrubal's troubles were not yet over. In the extremity of their terror and perplexity, the Carthaginians condemned to death both him and Corbulo, the governor of the city whose plea for justice had ended so disastrously, and despatched an embassy to Rome, imploring pardon and laying the whole blame upon them. Hasdrubal saved himself by flight.

The end was now drawing near. Rome had accepted the dictum of Cato, and made the destruction of Carthage the keystone of her policy. It was true that Carthage had been wilfully attacked by Masinissa, and, like the hippopotamus, had shown herself *très mechante*, only in that she had defended

herself against his unprovoked assaults ; it was true also that she had been defeated. Still, she had ventured to resist the ally of Rome, and, in her present temper, that was enough to enable Rome to resort to arms. Indeed there was another reason. It was one thing to humble Carthage ; it was quite another to allow a troublesome, and possibly even dangerous, ally to increase his power and empire at her expense.

When one power has determined to attack another, it has never been found difficult to make or invent a pretext ; and now Rome had found an excuse for doing what her mind was set upon. Then came another inducement. Utica, still smarting under the supremacy of her younger sister, sent an embassy to Rome, put herself unreservedly at her disposal, and, in fact, became the basis of operations in the war which soon followed.

Meanwhile, until Rome was ready to begin, diplomatic negotiations were kept up with Carthage. In 149 B.C. a last embassy was sent by the terrified Pœni with unlimited powers to accept any terms that might be imposed. "What do you want us to do?" they asked. "You must satisfy the Roman people." "But how?" "That you already know." And with this answer they had to be content. The news that the Roman fleet had sailed was the first intimation vouchsafed to Carthage that war had been declared.

Still one more despairing effort was made. Three hundred hostages, the children of the noblest families, were demanded, and surrendered to the Consul at Lilybœum. In return a promise was given that the Carthaginians should be left free and retain their land ; of the city nothing was said. The details were to be settled when the Consuls landed in Africa. Thus began the third, and last Punic War.

Much had changed since Zama and all the great protagonists had passed away. The fierce old fighter, Masinissa, had died at last, at the age of ninety years, leaving a child of four<sup>1</sup>—just too soon to see the downfall of Carthage. Scipio, the great Africanus, had died dishonoured and almost in exile at his home in Campania, refusing with his last breath to allow his bones to be laid in the sepulchre of his fathers on the Appian Way, outside the gate of the ungrateful city. “Ingrata Patria, ne ossa quidem habebis.” Such was the epitaph he desired to have engraved on his tomb. The ring—

“Cannarum vindex, et tanti sanguinis ultor”<sup>2</sup>—

had done its work, and Hannibal had died by his own hand, in exile, at the court of Prusias in Bithynia, 183 B.C., pursued to the last by the unrelenting hatred, the daughter of fear, of Rome.

But the old names reappear. Another Hasdrubal ruled in Carthage, and another Scipio was to lead the legions of Rome to victory final and complete.

The two Consuls, Marcius Manilius and Lucius Censorinus, one commanding the army, the other the fleet, landed at Utica unopposed, 149 B.C., and the Gerusia of Carthage attended in a body to know their fate.

The first orders were to disarm the city, to surrender not only the tiny fleet left her, but all materials for shipbuilding, all military stores, and all arms in public or private hands.

This was agreed to; all the ships, all the dockyard stores, three thousand catapults, and two hundred thousand suits of armour were delivered up.

Then, with a *perfidia plusquam Punicâ*, Marcius

<sup>1</sup> Or one year old. Cf. Mommsen, III. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, x. 165.

Censorinus pronounced sentence. The Senate, he said, ordered that the city should be destroyed, but the inhabitants were left at liberty to build another wherever they chose, but not within ten miles of the sea.

When the Gerusia returned with the fatal news they were greeted with an outburst of furious resentment and indignation, which recalls that aroused by the approach of Regulus. The gates were closed, public and private buildings were destroyed, the stones were carried to the walls, and with the timbers new catapults were constructed, the ladies cutting off their hair to be twisted into thongs; and when, after a few days' delay, the Romans advanced deliberately to take possession of a defenceless city, they found it armed and prepared for resistance to the death.

By the surrender of her fleet, Carthage had lost the command of the sea, and with it the control of the isthmus which lay between the city walls and the mountains of the Djebel el Ahmor, the first line of defence with which nature had provided her. Still, the natural strength of her position and her almost impregnable fortifications made the task of the Romans one of extreme difficulty.

The city, as already said, occupied a triangular peninsula at the end of the isthmus. Its land frontage from Kamart to the Ligula was about six miles in length; its two sea fronts, from Kamart to Cape Carthage, and from Cape Carthage to the Ligula, were about four miles each.

The side towards the isthmus was defended by a line of fortifications so vast as to be described as a camp in itself; but about its exact nature there is some difference of opinion.

Appian describes it as a "triple wall," each wall being of the same height as the others. The height of the curtain of these walls, not including the battlements, was forty-five feet; the thickness was thirty-three feet. At every two hundred yards there was a tower four storeys high. The wall itself was divided into two storeys. In the lower were stalls and provender for three hundred elephants; in the upper, stabling and fodder for four thousand horses, and barrack accommodation for twenty-four thousand men—four thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry.

The foundations of this wall have been discovered near Byrsa, at a depth of fifty feet below the present level of the ground. The exact dimensions, as given by Beulé, who conducted the excavations, are as follows:—

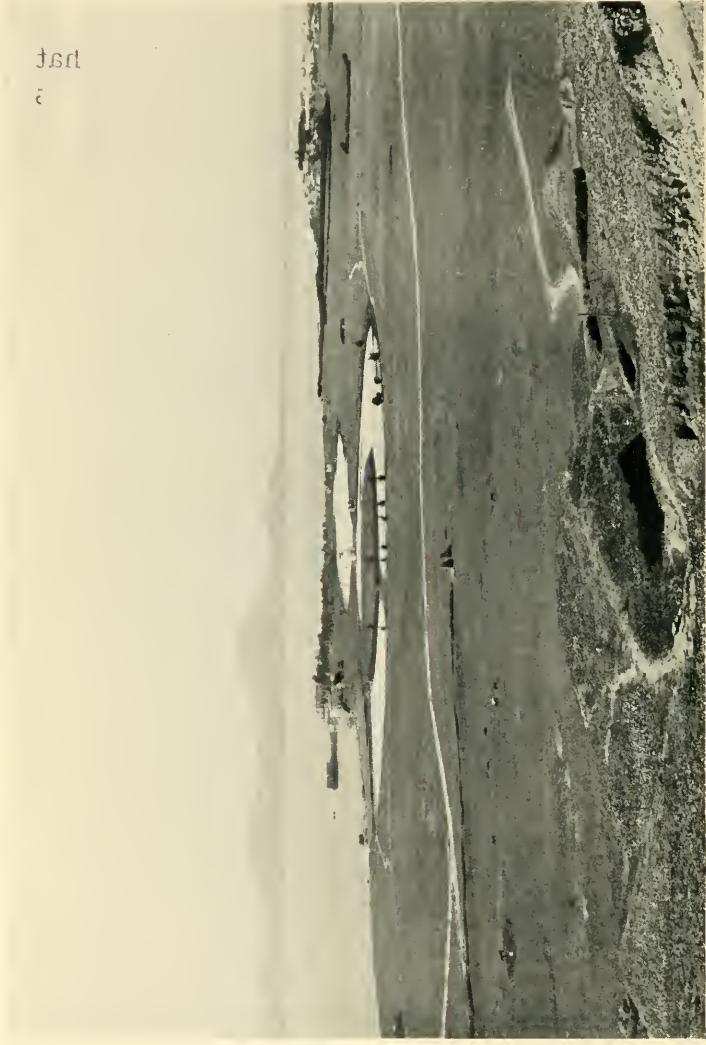
Thickness of the outer wall . . .	6½ feet
Corridor . . . . .	6 „
Thickness of front wall of casemates .	3¼ „
Casemates . . . . .	14 „
Thickness of inner wall of casemates .	3¼ „
<hr/>	
33 feet.	

This gives a total of thirty-three feet, and corresponds exactly with the measurement given by Appian. But the question remains, was this all he meant by a triple wall, each wall being the same height?

Previous to the excavations of Beulé, it had been generally assumed that he was describing defences like those which are known to have existed at Thapsus, where, at a distance of forty yards in front of the main wall, ran a second, fifteen feet high, while at a distance of another forty yards there ran a bank crowned

1332. 33  
1333. 33

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ANCIENT PORTS OF CARTHAGE, FROM BYESA

with a palisade—each wall being protected by a deep ditch. But of these outer defences, if they ever existed at Carthage, no trace has been discovered; and, in any case, the statement that the three walls were of the same height would be unmeaning. Mommсен therefore concludes, and probably correctly, t' there was only one wall, that of which the foundations have been discovered, and that the three walls of which Appian speaks are the outer, inner, and dividing walls of this one fortification. Appian, who lived in the second century after Christ, had, of course, never seen the walls, and Polybius, from whom he got his information, may have failed him on this point, or been misunderstood.

Along the sea front from Kamart, round by Cape Carthage to the height now crowned by Bordj-el-Djedid, the coast is mountainous, and a single wall of circumvallation was considered, and ultimately proved to be, protection enough. From the Bordj to the Ligula ran the quays of the city proper.

At a point now called El Kram, just above what we have called the Ligula, where the isthmus narrows down into the neck of land which shuts in the Lake of Tunis, the shore, bending sharply to the east, forms a little bay, from the farther point of which ran out a great breakwater. Here was the sheltered entrance to the great harbours, which covered an area of about seventy acres. The entrance was closed by huge chains. The first harbour was a long quadrilateral—this was for the mercantile shipping; from this another cutting led into the Cothon, or naval port and dock-yard. Both were artificial, like those at Thapsus, Hadrumetum, Utica, and Rusicade (Philippeville), and lay parallel to the seashore, from which they were separated by the quays.

The inner, and more interesting, Cothon was round and surrounded by two hundred and twenty docks, each large enough to hold a vessel of war. At the entrance of these were Ionic columns, so that the effect was that of one vast circular arcade. Behind lay the necessary buildings of an arsenal or dockyard, and the whole was enclosed by a wall, so lofty that no one in the town, or even in the outer harbour, could watch the work that was being done inside.

In the centre of this harbour was a round island connected with the shore by a jetty to the north—that is, opposite the entrance. On this stood the admiral's house, from which rose a lofty tower commanding a full view of the city and of the sea.<sup>1</sup>

From the breakwater to the foot of the hill now crowned by Bordj-el-Djedid, a distance of about two and a half miles, stretched the quays. How they were protected we are not told, but no landing was ever effected there, or even attempted, except on one occasion, when it failed.

From the end of the quays, under the Bordj-el-Djedid,<sup>2</sup> started the two lines of wall which constituted the fortifications of the city proper. The first, dividing the city from the vast suburb of Megara, met the triple wall about half-way between Kamart and the Ligula. The second ran to Byrsa, and thence to the Ligula. This enclosed what may be called the fortress and arsenal; the whole of this is sometimes called Byrsa, just as both harbours are sometimes included under the name of Cothon.

<sup>1</sup> After events, in the course of the siege, seem to show that the great triple wall was carried down to the sea between the harbours, thus leaving the mercantile harbour unprotected; but this seems so unlikely on other grounds, that it is better to leave the question an open one.

<sup>2</sup> These details are uncertain, but this is the view taken by Tissot and Boissier.

The population of the city was about seven hundred thousand.

The army outside the walls was commanded by the Hasdrubal whose defeat by Masinissa has been related. Under him, as his lieutenant, was a brilliant young officer, Hamilco Phameas, whose audacity and enterprise made him the most dreaded of all the Carthaginian officers.<sup>1</sup> The command inside the city was entrusted to another Hasdrubal, grandson of Masinissa. Fortunately we are saved from any danger of confusing the two by the fact that this latter was soon murdered in the Senate House, at the instigation of his namesake outside the city.

Against a city thus fortified, and defended by desperate men, the Romans were for a long time powerless. Manilius attacked the city from the land, but in spite of the fact that two of his engines were so huge that they required six thousand men apiece to work them, he was unable to make a practicable breach.<sup>2</sup>

By sea the Carthaginians, although they had surrendered their navy, more than once destroyed, or seriously damaged, the Roman fleets by means of fire-ships; and, when the wind was favourable, their allies succeeded continually in running the blockade, and kept the city well supplied with provisions.

For the space of two years the siege dragged on. Manilius and Censorinus were, in due course, superseded by Lucius Piso and Lucius Mancinus, 148 B.C., but with no better effect. The Roman army still lay encamped helplessly before the city, but the end seemed no nearer. Discipline became relaxed, and

<sup>1</sup> The headquarters were at Nepheris, on the other side of the lake.

<sup>2</sup> They were called the Army and the Navy, from the men who worked them.

such assaults as were delivered did more harm to the attacking party than to the defenders. But it was not the way of Rome to look back when she had on hand a piece of work on which her heart was set. She knew, or believed, that Carthage stood between her and the realisation of her dreams of free expansion of trade, and of the naval supremacy which she considered necessary for this expansion ; and so Carthage must go, at whatever cost to herself.

Still, though her determination never wavered, her patience was becoming exhausted. The elections were drawing near, and young Scipio—Publius Cornelius Scipio Æmilianus Africanus Minor, to give him for once the full name and title by which he was afterwards known—who had been serving in the African army as military tribune, returned to Rome as a candidate for the post of Ædile. But the eyes and hopes of Rome were fixed upon him as the man who should bring the war with Carthage to a triumphant conclusion. He had won his spurs in Africa as well as in Spain. He had earned the good opinion of Cato, who, in the Senate, had applied to him the words which Homer used of Tiresias, "He only is a living man—the rest are empty shadows." Above all, he had shown that by his tact and probity he could win the confidence of barbarians. In Spain, it was said that a town which had refused to surrender to the Consul, opened its gates willingly to him ; in Africa he had gained the warm friendship and unbounded confidence of the wary Masinissa, who had appointed him executor of his will. Though under the legal age, for he was only thirty-seven, he was unanimously elected Consul, 148 B.C., and, although by law the provinces were given by lot, Africa was assigned to him. This was in the year 147 B.C.

The first task of Scipio on his arrival in Africa was to rescue Mancinus from a very serious difficulty. Naturally anxious to win some signal success before his term of command expired, the Consul delivered a furious attack upon the city and succeeded in penetrating within the walls. Once there he found himself equally unable to advance or to retire. For some unexplained reason his colleague, Piso, made no effort to relieve him. Had it not been for the opportune arrival of Scipio, who advanced at once to his assistance, and extricated him from his perilous position, the Roman arms would have sustained a disastrous defeat.

The two outgoing Consuls then returned to Rome, and Scipio assumed supreme command, and proceeded to make mistakes on his own account. He knew the impatience at Rome, and was at least as anxious to celebrate his arrival by some great feat of arms as Mancinus had been to dignify his departure.

There were two weak angles in the defences of Carthage, the one on the Ligula, the other at the foot of Kamart, where the triple wall ceased and gave place to the single wall along the sea front. By an act of almost incredible folly or self-confidence, the Carthaginians had left standing, at this latter point, the tower of a private house, higher than the wall and commanding it. From the top of this tower some Roman soldiers passed to the wall, descended into Megara, and opened a neighbouring gate for the Romans. Scipio entered unopposed, with four thousand men, but found himself in the same position as Mancinus. Between him and the city proper lay a maze of narrow alleys winding between the lofty walls of villas and gardens, and even if he had succeeded in fighting his way through these, he would have

found his advance barred by the great wall of the city. Such a plan of attack would have involved enormous risks of failure, and even if successful would have been attended by a loss of life which he dared not face. He gave up the attempt as hopeless, retired from Megara, and sat down for a regular siege.

But, though it had failed in its immediate object, this assault was not without any result. Alarmed at such vigour and so near an approach to success, the army encamped on the isthmus, outside the walls, retreated into Byrsa, and left Scipio free for the work which he next took in hand. Hasdrubal, not unnaturally enraged at such cowardly insubordination, replied by the usual Carthaginian method of bringing all his prisoners on to the walls and there massacring them, with horrible tortures, in full sight of the Romans.

After restoring discipline in the camp, Scipio proceeded at once to make the siege an effective blockade by land and sea. Advancing his headquarters from Utica to the isthmus between Djebel-el-Ahmer and the city, he constructed across it, at a distance of a mile and a half from Carthage, a quadrilateral fortification, consisting, on three sides, of a deep fosse and bank strengthened by a stockade ; on the fourth side, facing the city, he built a great wall with towers, the central one being sufficiently lofty to command Carthage ; this immense work was completed in twenty days, and on the land side Carthage was effectually isolated.

An even more important work, and one for which he was specially fitted, was to win over her allies. A dramatic story is told of an interview with Phameas. They stood on either side of a river and discussed the question. At first Phameas, who had no exalted

opinion of the honour or trustworthiness of Rome, hesitated ; after consideration, however, the arguments and promises of Scipio, coupled with that persuasive confidence which he always inspired and deserved, prevailed, and the most active of her enemies became the firm ally of Rome, and was taken into the immediate service of the Consul.

But only half his task, and that the easier, was as yet accomplished, for Carthage was still receiving an adequate supply of provisions by sea. These came largely from Bithyas, a Numidian sheik who had recently joined the Carthaginians with eight hundred horse, and seems to have conducted much of the blockade-running between the camp at Nepheris and the city.

Scipio's next enterprise was to close the mouth of the harbours. Fighting his way up to the Ligula, he threw across the little bay, from the shore to the break-water which protected the entrance to the ports, a gigantic jetty of hewn stones ninety feet wide, which effectually blocked the approach and rendered relief from the sea as impossible as from land.<sup>1</sup>

But the Carthaginians were not content to see themselves thus systematically hemmed in by sea and land without an effort to break the meshes of the deadly net which was being drawn around them. Working night and day with the feverish energy of despair, they built of such materials as they had, a squadron of fifty new warships, and cut an outlet through the quay, from the inner harbour or Cothon, to the sea.

On the very day the jetty was completed, the new fleet of the enemy broke with triumphant shouts

<sup>1</sup> This immense work was accomplished in thirty days. Traces of the jetty are still visible.

into the open sea, and Scipio saw his work undone. Nor was this the worst. In the belief that the sea was clear, the Roman ships had been half dismantled, the weapons of war had been removed to the siege works, and the crews had been landed to build the jetty. If the Carthaginians had attacked at once, they might have destroyed the fleet utterly, or at any rate struck a blow from which it would have taken the Romans long to recover. Instead of this, they contented themselves with making a noisy and harmless demonstration, and returned into harbour. For three days they remained inactive, and during that time Scipio was able to re-man and re-arm the fleet. At last they offered battle. The engagement lasted the whole day, and ended in favour of the Carthaginians. When returning to the harbour, however, the vessels were entangled in a mass of shipping which was issuing from the new outlet, and it was found necessary to beach them off the quays. Here they were again attacked by the Romans, and completely destroyed; Scipio at the same time furiously assaulted the entrance to the harbours, using his new jetty as a causeway for his troops. Once more Carthage owed her deliverance to the desperate valour of her children. Wading or swimming into the sea with burning torches, they set fire to the Roman ships and siege works and beat off the enemy, while the land attack by Scipio was repulsed by a frantic sally against which even the disciplined courage of the legionaries was of no avail. The outer harbour, however, remained in the hands of the Romans.<sup>1</sup>

Once more Scipio had to own himself foiled and be content to wait; but this time it was only for a season. The quarry was penned in safely by both

<sup>1</sup> It had been burnt by Hasdrubal, and, probably, rendered useless.

land and sea, and the end was near and certain. Now he had an ally who could be trusted, and against whom all human valour was in vain. Of the three terrible handmaidens who wait ever upon War—Fire, Blood, and Famine—Scipio “chose the meekest maid of the three,” and she served him well. Afterwards came the turn of the other two. He had only to wait a little, while Famine and her daughter Pestilence did his work for him. The delay, however, was not wasted in idleness; his colleague Lælius, taking with him Gulussa, son of Masinissa, whom Scipio had attached closely to himself, cleared the country of the native allies of the Carthaginians. Bithyas was taken prisoner, the camp at Nepheris<sup>1</sup> was captured after a siege of twenty-two days, and the defenders, to the number of eighty thousand, put to the sword.

So passed the terrible winter of 147–6 B.C., the Romans keeping watch like wolves outside, and seven hundred thousand wretches starving inside the walls of the doomed city. When, early in the spring, “at the time when kings go forth to battle,” Scipio renewed the attack, it was against an enemy gaunt with famine, decimated by disease, only the spectres of their old valiant selves, that he had to fight.

Once more he poured his legions over the jetty which he had built, on to the breakwater, and so by the harbour mouth into the city. Fighting his way inch by inch, he drove the enemy back upon the Cothon or inner harbour; this also he stormed, and that night he bivouacked in the Forum, within the innermost wall of the city. Thence to the foot of the fortress hill of Byrsa was a distance of about six hundred yards. You can walk it now in a few minutes, down

<sup>1</sup> Now Henchir-bou-Beker, between Bou Kornein and Djebel Ressas, in the Plain of Mornag.

a hillside blazing with tall yellow pyrethrum and sweet with wild mignonette, and so on through pleasant level fields of corn and barley. It took the Romans six awful days and nights of carnage to force their way to the foot of the citadel, burning and destroying as they went, sparing neither man, woman, nor child, trampling living and dead alike under their horses' hoofs, or burying them in the blazing wreckage of their ruined homes. Before them the glorious city, behind them a desolate wilderness.

Then at last came a pause in the butchery. Hasdrubal surrendered on the sole condition that the lives of the survivors should be spared, and fifty thousand miserable creatures, starving and half naked, came out of Byrsa to claim such mercy as an enemy flushed with victory and glutted with slaughter might show. They were sent over to Italy and sold as slaves.

There were, however, still in Byrsa nine hundred deserters who had been expressly excluded by Scipio from the promised amnesty. These shut themselves up within the great Temple of Eschmoun, and Hasdrubal with his wife and children remained with them. Next day the courage of Hasdrubal also failed him, and he too surrendered himself to Scipio.

Scipio, so runs the story, dragged the unhappy man, clad in royal apparel, to a place<sup>1</sup> whence he could see and hear all that passed in Byrsa. He watched the men whom he had deserted set fire to the temple and perish in the flames. After enduring the fierce reproaches of his wife, he saw her kill his children one by one and cast them into the fire, before leaping into it herself, like another Elissar. And so he was led away to be seen no more until the day

<sup>1</sup> Probably the hill opposite Byrsa, now called the Hill of Juno. But the story is doubtful, and very unlike Scipio.

when he graced the triumph of the conqueror in Rome. Finally, he and Bithyas were confined, as State prisoners, in the centre of Italy, and treated with tolerable kindness.

The work of Scipio, the younger Africanus, was done, and he returned to Rome to make his report and celebrate his triumph. When consulted by the Senate as to the future of Carthage, he declined to give any advice, though it was understood that his opinion was against the wanton destruction of what remained of the city. The Senate was, however, in no mood to listen to counsels of leniency even from Scipio, and it was finally determined that the city should be razed to the ground, the site ploughed over, and a solemn curse pronounced on any man who should build house or plant corn there for ever. Ten commissioners were appointed to give effect to the decree. But their task was an easy one. When the inhabitants of Megara found that the city was lost, they set fire to what remained. For seventeen days the conflagration raged—the funeral pyre of a dead city and civilisation. *Delenda est Carthago*, such had been the resolve; and now, *Carthago deleta est*—wiped out.

## CHAPTER V

THE MARCH OF EMPIRE, 146 B.C.—A.D. 40

“*Troja fuit.*” “Troy has been.” So the Dido had said to Æneas; and now the same was true of her own city also.

But the Romans were more embarrassed than intoxicated by their success. Their rival was destroyed, their commerce was safe, the trade routes in the Mediterranean were theirs. This was what they had fought for and won, and the Senate did not desire, so Strabo tells us, more, or to take upon its shoulders the burden of a new foreign possession. That the fall of Carthage had given them an African empire; that it would be impossible for them to set any bounds to their advance short of those which nature had fixed in sand or sea—this they realised as little as the ordinary Englishman saw that the prize won by Nelson on the Nile, or at Trafalgar, was the over-lordship of Egypt and India. But so it was, *Vestigia . . . nulla retrorsum.*<sup>1</sup> When a nation has put its hand to the plough, it cannot look back, even if it would.

Meanwhile Rome fixed the seat of government at Utica, the base of the operations against Carthage, and waited.

But the site of Carthage was too famous and important to remain long unoccupied, or to be allowed to fall into other, and perhaps hostile, hands. Within twenty-four years of its destruction Caius

<sup>1</sup> Hor. Ep. I. i. 75.

Gracchus, 122 B.C., was entrusted with the work of occupying the accursed <sup>1</sup> site and founding there, with six thousand colonists, a new city of Junonia. Little, however, came of it ; <sup>2</sup> indeed, the main object of the Senate was to get rid of and discredit a dangerous man. Coins, however, have been found bearing Punic names and the Punic title of Suffete, which seem to belong to this period, and to show that the place was occupied by a population in which the remains of the Carthaginian inhabitants lived, on at least equal terms with the Romans. Cæsar slept there after the battle of Thapsus, 46 B.C., and in consequence of a dream, entered in his diary next morning, "Rebuild Carthage." His murder prevented his plans from being carried out, and the work was left for Augustus.

Meanwhile the Romans contented themselves with annexing the territory of Carthage, consisting of little more than the corner of Tunisia between the islands of Thabraca (Tabarka) and Kerkennah ; this formed Provincia Africa, and it was from this little angle of land that the name spread until it embraced the whole of the vast continent ; just as the whole native race of North Africa received their name of "Berbers" from the Brabra of the basin of the Nile—the first Africans with whom the Arab invaders came into conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond these narrow limits they troubled them-

<sup>1</sup> It seems strange that the solemn curse should have been so soon forgotten or ignored. Probably it applied only to the city proper, and it was proposed to build the new city on the site of Megara.

<sup>2</sup> The lines drawn for the streets of the new city are still visible. "The *Cardo* and the *Decumanus Maximus* correspond with the road which leads north to the village of Kamart, and that which descends from Sidi-bou-Said towards the Lake of Tunis."—*Ruines de Carthage*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> This accidental renaming of a country is curiously common. Thus Canaan took its new name from the Philistines, Hellas from the Graii, Etruria and Latium from the Itali, Gaul from the Franks, Britain from the Angles, Caledonia from the Irish Scots.

selves with the affairs of their neighbours as little as might be. They were content that their little settlement should be surrounded on three sides by the kingdom of Numidia, which Masinissa had built up, and Mauretania kept her kings. The country was vast, difficult of access, and but little known, and the Senate preferred to leave the task of governing it in the hands of the native princes. The position was like that of England in India, where the native princes have been watched, advised, subsidised, and tolerated, just so far as was politically advisable, and just so long as they behaved themselves. The iron hand wore the velvet glove, but it was iron still.

For a time this attitude of detachment answered sufficiently well, but it could not last long. Masinissa was dead, and both interest and gratitude attached his successor, Mecipsa, firmly to Rome. He was a faithful ally in the sense in which the Senate understood the term: he welcomed the Italian merchants and bankers and allowed them to settle in his cities, even in Cirta itself; and his cavalry served in the Roman armies. But on his death, in 118 B.C., troubles began at once. His two sons, Hiempsal and Adherbal, were as tame as could be desired, but besides these he left a nephew, a natural son of his brother Mastanabal, who, after learning his business as a cavalry officer in the army of Scipio, was destined to revolutionise the Roman rule in Africa.

Jugurtha was a worthy descendant of Masinissa. A born fighter and hunter, brave, handsome, generous, he was the idol of his soldiers, and won a popularity which was enhanced by his barbaric virtues of crafty, unscrupulous ambition and a savage indifference to life. Unfortunately for Rome, he had learnt much in the camp of Scipio besides the art of war;

he had fathomed the depravity of the masters of the world, and had been taught that, in dealing with such men, everything was possible to him who possessed sufficient audacity and money.

Events moved rapidly. In 117 B.C. Hiempsal was murdered, probably by Jugurtha, and Adherbal, worsted in the war which ensued, fled to Italy to avoid a like fate, and to lay his grievances before the tribunal at Rome. After preparing the ground with liberal bribes, Jugurtha followed him, and also placed himself unreservedly in the hands of the Senate. Such tact and submission succeeded as they deserved, and he was acquitted. Commissioners were sent to Numidia to divide the country between the rivals. Jugurtha bribed them also and obtained the lion's share. On their departure he began the war again, took Cirta and murdered Adherbal, and with him the Italian soldiers and merchants who had taken his part. This was a fatal mistake, for the popular indignation at Rome compelled the Senate to declare war. The command was given to the Consul, Calpurnius. Him also Jugurtha bribed and obtained terms of peace so favourable that the Senate hesitated to ratify them. Once again Jugurtha had to visit Rome and explain matters by his one unfailing argument of gold. At Rome he found Massiva, son of the Gulussa who had done such yeoman service for Scipio in the siege of Carthage. There was some talk of sharing the kingdom between the cousins, so him, too, Jugurtha was compelled to murder. This was too much. Hitherto Jugurtha had worked on the assumption that everything was to be bought at Rome; "*Urbem venalem*," he is reported to have often said, "*et mature perituram si emptorem invenerit*."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jug. 35. Again: "*Certum esse ratus omnia Romæ venalia esse*" (Jug. 20).

Now the rule broke down, and although his safe conduct was respected, he was ordered to leave the city.

The favourite officer of Scipio knew the strength and the weakness of the army in which he had served, and against which he was now to fight. He knew also the character and resources of the country in which the war was to be carried on. Avoiding pitched battles, he waged a guerilla war of perpetual skirmishes, ambuscades, surprises. South Africa has taught us how long and difficult a task it is for trained troops, in the enemy's country, to meet such tactics as these, especially if carried out by a commander of real military genius. In 110 B.C. he even succeeded in defeating the Consul Aulus, and made the army pass under the yoke.

However, in the end, against such men as Metellus, Marius, and Sylla, this strategy was in vain. Metellus forced him to make a stand on the Multhul and defeated him, much as Kitchener did the Mahdi at Omdurman, and besieged and took his cities one after the other. Marius drove him back into the extreme south, and again defeated him and his ally and father-in-law, Bocchus, King of Mauretania. The diplomacy of Sylla won over Bocchus. Jugurtha was betrayed into the hands of the Romans, and after figuring, like Hasdrubal, in the triumph of his conqueror, was lowered into the "cold bath" of the Tullianum<sup>1</sup> and starved to death.

Again Rome disdained to fly upon the spoil. Bocchus was rewarded for his treachery with the country west of Numidia, and the rest was left in the

<sup>1</sup> The Tullianum is now known, wrongly, as the Mamertine Prison, of which it was at first the well, and then, when drained into the Cloaca Maxima, the place of execution for important political prisoners such as Catiline. The prison, important fragments of which still remain, stood above it.

hands of Gunda, the grandson of Masinissa, who reigned in peaceful obscurity at Cirta.

Tribal jealousies and ambitions have always rendered the Berbers incapable of united or sustained patriotic action. After the fall of Jugurtha, the petty kings and princes were far more anxious to obtain the help of Rome against their rivals than to unite with those rivals and secure liberty for Africa. And thus it happened that the feuds at Rome between Marius and Sylla, or Pompey and Cæsar, were taken up eagerly in Africa and often fought out on African soil. Hiempsal II., the son of Gunda, who had succeeded to the throne of Numidia, espoused the cause of Sylla. He was deposed by the lieutenant of Marius and reinstated by Pompey, who thus secured the adherence of himself and his son Juba I. for the Senatorial party in the war with Cæsar. When, after the battle of Pharsalia, Cæsar's lieutenant was killed, and Africa occupied by Attius Varus on behalf of the Senate, Juba at once joined him. While Cæsar was busy in Egypt and Pontus, the Pompeians massed their scattered forces in Africa. At the head were Q. Metellus Scipio, Afranius, and Cato, who crossed over from Italy with what troops he could collect, and joined them from the south, marching from Cyrene along the shores of the Syrtes. The adhesion of Juba to the Pompeians secured the alliance of Bocchus and Bogad, kings of Mauretania, for Cæsar; and on the west the forces of the Senate were kept in check by their troops, under the command of a Roman adventurer, P. Sittius, until such time as Cæsar himself might come. This was not until the autumn of the year 47 B.C. In April 46 B.C., Cæsar won his complete and final victory at Thapsus (Ras Dinas), on the coast between Monastir and Metidia, a hundred miles

south of Carthage. Juba and Cato committed suicide, the one on the field of battle and the other at Utica, and Cæsar returned in triumph to Rome, taking with him the little son of Juba, who was to reappear later on as Juba II. The boy was treated with no ordinary distinction, kindness, and wisdom. He was entrusted to the care of Octavia, Cæsar's own sister, and widow of both Pompey and Anthony, one of the very noblest of the ladies of Rome in rank and character, and in time was given in marriage Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Anthony and Cleopatra.

Thus fell the kingdom of Numidia, and for a time even the name was blotted out. The country was divided into two provinces: all west of the Great River, the Ampsaga, was given to the kings of Mauretania, while all to the east, though formally annexed under the name of New Africa, and placed, fortunately for us, under the governorship of Sallust,<sup>1</sup> was formed into a quasi-kingdom with its capital at Cirta, and given to P. Sittius, who was thus rewarded for his timely loyalty to Cæsar.

The indecision and hesitation of Roman policy in Africa were only the reflex and outcome of the uncertainty which reigned in Rome itself as to its own future. The death-struggle of the dying Republic with the coming Empire gave her but little time or taste for foreign adventure. When this was over, and the Empire was firmly established in the hands of Augustus, the prudence and caution remained, but the hesitation vanished. In the division of territory between the members of the Second Triumvirate, in

<sup>1</sup> Sir Lambert Playfair speaks of an inscription, found in the gorge of the Rummel, which contains the words, "FINIS FUNDI SALLUSTIANI," "The Boundary of the Estate of Sallust." His house on the Quirinal was enriched with the spoils of Cirta and neighbouring cities such as Calama, Thagaste, and Hippo.

43 B.C., all Africa was assigned to Octavius. True to the old principle of using native rulers so far as possible, he restored for the moment the old kingdom of Numidia, giving it the name of Numidia Provincia, and setting over it (30 B.C.) the young King Juba II. This arrangement, however, did not last for long. Five years later the throne of Mauretania became vacant, and was given to Juba, with Iol, an old Carthaginian town on the coast, thirty miles west of Algiers, as his capital. Here he built Cæsarea (Cherchel), the only great Roman city west of Cirta, and reigned for nearly fifty years over a kingdom which included the whole of Morocco and the greater part of Algeria. A thorough Roman by education and training, a man of culture and intellect, the husband of one of the most notable women in the world, Juba made his new capital the most splendid city in Africa, if second to any, second only to Carthage itself, *terrarum decus*,<sup>1</sup> and the rival in glory of Imperial Rome. Some scattered ruins on a little plain between the hills and the sea are all that now remains of this magnificence ; but the beauty of the statues found there, the delicate carving of the capitals, and the lovely pillars which adorned the Arab mosque,<sup>2</sup> bear witness to the cultured taste of its founder, while the enormous Thermæ and the vast amphitheatre and circus testify to the less intellectual side of Roman civilisation.<sup>3</sup>

On his death in A.D. 19 he was succeeded by his son Ptolemy ; but the splendour of his Court in the west of Africa and the growing importance and power of the Roman Proconsul in the east, aroused the jealous fears of Caligula. The power of the latter

<sup>1</sup> Aur. Victor Caes. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Now the Military Hospital.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of his mausoleum, the Kbour Roumia, *vide* Part II., Chapter III.

he effectually curbed by placing the army under the command of a Legatus Proprætor, appointed by and responsible to himself alone. Ptolemy he summoned to Rome, and there, rendered doubly jealous by his youthful beauty, his popularity, and, as we are expressly told, the magnificence of his dress, he murdered him and finally annexed his kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Thus ended the march of the Roman Empire, stopped only, like the marauding foray of Sidi Okba, by the Atlantic waves. It had spread over two hundred years. After the fall of Carthage, 146 B.C., Provincia Africa had been annexed; after the battle of Thapsus, 46 B.C., Numidia; and now, on the death of Ptolemy, A.D. 40, Mauretania also. From the Syrtes to the Pillars of Hercules, all owned the sway of Rome.

This gradual, inevitable extension of the Roman Empire, by the very force of circumstances, presents an interesting parallel to the building up of our own. Judging from the wide extent of their conquests, we are apt to think of the Romans as insatiable in their ambition, and determined to make themselves the masters of the world. This was a kind of flattery which tickled the ears of Emperors, and so it was

<sup>1</sup> Three portrait busts have been found at Cherchel, and are now in the Museum at Algiers, which are supposed to represent the three Jubas. If this identification be correct, a comparison between them is interesting.

Juba I. has a long, lean, wild face, with strongly-marked, aquiline features, and a long beard.

Juba II. is essentially Roman in appearance. He is clean-shaven, with a round head, broad forehead, square chin, bull neck, and blunt Berber features, so far as we can judge, for the nose is missing.

Juba III. (Ptolemy) is utterly decadent and sensual. He has returned to the beard, which, however, is carefully trimmed; the cheeks are prominent, and the nose, pinched and hooked, is sunk between them; the mouth is small and the lips are full. There is little to justify the alleged jealousy of Caligula, yet this is, I believe, the best authenticated of the three busts.

offered them in abundance by Court poets and other sycophants—

“Romanos, Rerum dominos, Gentemque togatam”;<sup>1</sup>

and again—

“Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.”<sup>2</sup>

So wrote Vergil, while the flattery offered by Horace was more fulsome because more personal.

In fact, they were a prudent, stolid, rather stupid people, like ourselves, with little imagination, no wild dreams of empire, and small liking for unprofitable adventure. But the necessities of trade carried them far and wide, one war led to another, a new province had to be conquered to insure the safety of an old one; and so the empire was built, almost against the will of the empire-builders.

Then as now, public opinion was divided. There were wild Imperialists and timid Little Romans. When Hannibal was defeated at Zama, questions were asked in the Senate as to the value of Carthage if they annexed it. On the fall of Carthage, there were not wanting politicians who were for withdrawing the troops and leaving Africa to itself. This was no mere passing phase of opinion. So late as the reign of Trajan, serious historians discussed the question whether it would have been better for Rome to have abstained from occupying Africa, or even Sicily, and to have contented herself with Italy only. But, for good or evil, perhaps for both, world history is not made like this, and nations, like men, sometimes have greatness thrust upon them. The advance of the Roman arms was embarrassed, delayed, thwarted by such counsels as these, but not stopped; hopeless struggles for liberty were encouraged, much blood was

<sup>1</sup> *Aen.* i. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Aen.* vi. 851.

shed, and bitter ill-will engendered and kept alive, but the end was inevitable, and it came, bringing with it to Africa two centuries of such prosperity as she has never known, before or since, safe under the ægis of the *Immensa Romanæ Pacis Majestas*.

But it was not enough to annex North Africa ; it had to be garrisoned also.

The nucleus or unit of the Roman army of occupation was the Legion, which corresponded more closely with our division, or even army corps, than with the regiment. The legion was territorial in the sense that it was raised and recruited in some one part of the Empire, but the duties assigned to it were usually in some far distant province, and from this it was never moved. The saying of Seneca, *Ubique Romanus vicit habitat*,<sup>1</sup> "Wherever the Roman has conquered he settles," was in a special sense true of the soldier. Veterans, when their time of service with the standards was over, did not return home. The Senate planted them somewhere as a colony, for every legionary was, *ipso facto*, a Roman citizen ; it provided them with land, slaves, and oxen ; it exempted them from taxation, and, in return, retained some claim upon their services for purposes of defence or police. There they married and settled. The wisdom of this policy is obvious. The men were provided for, and every settlement became a semi-military centre of loyalty to Rome. Traces of these colonies are to be found in all parts of North Africa. Thamugadi (Timgad) was built, at the command of Trajan, for the veterans of the XXX. Legio Ulpia Victrix, as a reward for their services on his Parthian campaign ; the soldiers of Marius found a home at Uci Majus (ed-Douemis) on the Medjerba ; others were established by Augustus

<sup>1</sup> Cons. ad Helv. 7.

at Saldæ (Bougie), others at Ammoedara (Haidra), and yet others, by Nerva, at Sitifis (Setif).

The task of holding North Africa, and especially of guarding the passes which led through the Aures Mountains from the Tell to the Sahara, was entrusted by Augustus to the III. Legio Augusta. It had been raised in the eastern provinces of the Empire, and strengthened with some cohorts of Commagenians from the army of Antiochus. It was now stationed in the west in accordance with the policy already noticed. It took up its work in North Africa at the very beginning of our era, and remained there long enough to play its part in the rebellion of the Gordians, A.D. 238, and to carry out the execution of Cyprian twenty years later.

But a single legion of six thousand men was manifestly inadequate to a task which, difficult at first when the Roman territory was but small, became overwhelming as by degrees Rome extended her dominions farther and farther to the west; and so round the legion there was collected a native army of auxiliary forces. The natives all round formed splendid material for soldiers; the Romans had learned to respect their prowess as enemies, now they enrolled them as comrades. Some were formed into *alæ* of cavalry, some into cohorts, officered by Romans; some took their names from the weapons they used, Sagittarii, or Archers; Funditores, or Slingers; some from their nationality; thus the important pass Calceus Herculis (El Kantara) was manned by a force from Palmyra, coming, that is, from the same part of the Empire as the legionaries themselves.

Even when thus strengthened by these native troops, the standing army of Rome was never very

large, considering the work it had to do. At the death of Augustus there were only twenty-five legions; under Vespasian, thirty; under Septimius Severus, thirty-three—that is, about two hundred thousand men of all branches. It was clearly impossible to spare more than one legion for North Africa, though at times of pressure others might be sent for some particular piece of work.<sup>1</sup> The legion was, under ordinary circumstances, held in reserve, the ordinary work being done by the native forces; these were in this way kept busy and loyal, and, as they had the pick of the fighting, they were happy.

To the south of the Roman provinces of Africa and Numidia runs the great range of Mons Aurasius—the Aures Mountains. Here the legion began its work by closing the easy passes which led down from the high plateaus to the level plains of South Tunisia. For this purpose they built at the eastern extremity of the range the strong fortress town of Theveste (Tebessa) on the site of an old Libyan stronghold which had been captured by Carthage just before the outbreak of the First Punic War. It was rebuilt and fortified by the Byzantine general, Solomon, in A.D. 535, and is now strongly held by the French. Here the legion was stationed for nearly a century. Then their headquarters were moved by Trajan from the eastern end of the Aures to the western, from Theveste to Lambæsis, to block the way of the Nomad marauders from the Oases of the Ziban into the fertile Roman territory. Between the two they built and fortified Mascula (Khenchela).

The great western gate of the desert, the “Foumes Sahara,” the Mouth of the Desert, as the Arabs

<sup>1</sup> Thus, on the pass of Kunga, an inscription has been found relating how the road was made by the Sixth Legion, in the reign of Antoninus Pius.

still call it, was the gorge "Calceus Herculis," cloven through the mountains by the heel of Hercules, according to the Romans, or by the sword of Sidi Abdallah, according to the later Moslem fable. It takes the modern name of El Kantara from the Roman bridge which spanned the Oued Ksour, or Kantara. The beauties of this wonderful gorge have often been described. So narrow that the Roman bridge had but one arch, it leads us down in less than half a mile from the cold, grey, rocky plain to the hot sands of the Sahara. In a few minutes we pass through a chaos of crags and precipices, from winter to summer, from grey to gold, from a treeless waste to the waving palms of the oases of the Ziban.<sup>1</sup>

The first work of the legion at its new station was to form a temporary camp, the remains of which can still be traced. It then proceeded to erect the great permanent camp of Lambæsis (Lambessa), which is to-day the most perfect example of a Roman camp of the first class that remains to us. Between the construction of these two camps—that is, about the years A.D. 100–110, the legion was employed in the building of the town of Thamugadi (Timgad).<sup>2</sup>

A drive of about eight miles across a level windy plain, along a straight military road, planted on each side with trees, brings us from the French garrison town of Batna to the Penitentiary, built by Napoleon III. for political prisoners, which now, with its garden, covers all the south-east quarter of the great camp.

<sup>1</sup> Later on, the outlet into El Outaya, the Great Plain, was closed by a fort, Burgum Commodianum, built by Marcus Antonius Gordianus; farther still to the south-east lay Vescera, or Bescera (Biskra), with a suburb, Ad Piscinum, at the hot springs, now known as Hammam-es-Salahin, the Holy Baths.

<sup>2</sup> This seems the most probable order. Possibly, however, Lambæsis was built before Thamugadi.

The plain lies at a level of three thousand six hundred feet above the sea ; to the south, the Aures range shelters it from the parching winds of the Sahara, and it is sufficiently watered by snow and rain, as well as by the streams which run among the hills. Doubtless it was once a district of extreme fertility, and bids fair to be so once again under the skilful husbandry of the French.

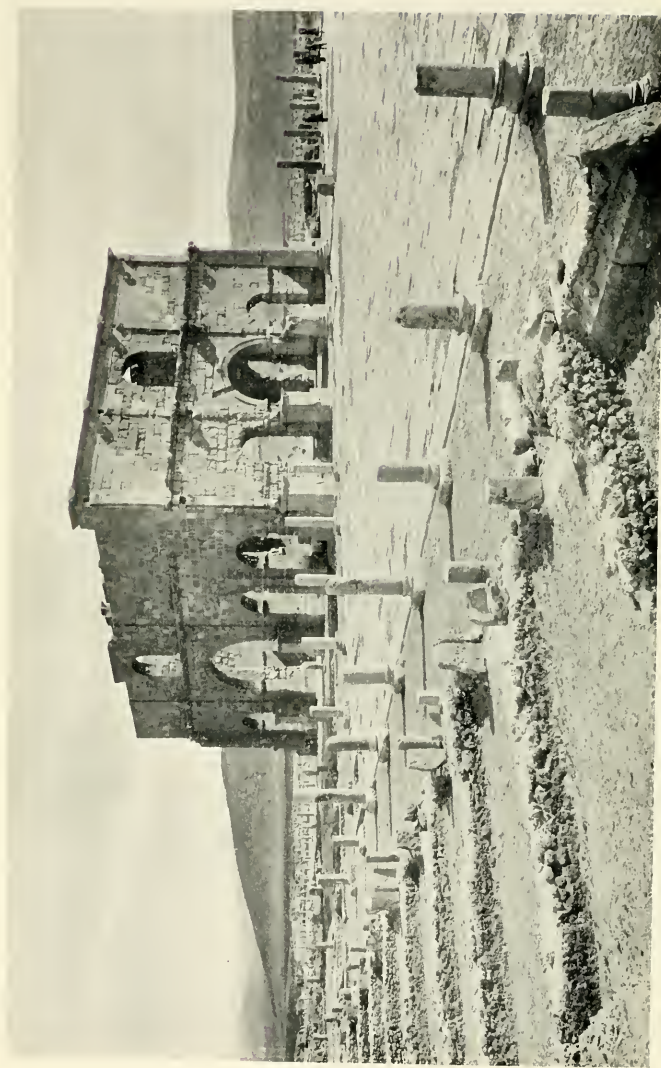
To our right, as we approach the Penitentiary, lie the meagre vestiges of the first camp ; to our left, the very important ruins of the second.

The camp, whose four walls face the cardinal points of the compass, consists of a great rectangular enclosure, measuring five hundred and fifty yards by four hundred and sixty, the shorter sides facing north and south. A tower stood at each of the four angles ; each of the longer curtain walls was further strengthened with five similar towers, each of the shorter with four. These all projected inwards,<sup>1</sup> so that the external face of the walls was unbroken, save by the flanking towers which protected the gates. Inside the walls ran the *Pomœrium* or broad Boulevard. The gates were four in number, one in each of the walls. Those facing north and south occupied the centre of the walls. Those to the east and west lay much to the north of the central point, so that the road which connected them ran along the northern side of the *Pretorium*, the great parade ground which occupied the centre of the camp. This road, called the *Decumanus Maximus*, was a broad, finely paved street, lined on each side with porticoes, and was the only thoroughfare through the camp.

The principal entrance was by the north gate.

<sup>1</sup> This distinguishes Roman from Byzantine work. In the latter the towers project outwards.





THE PRETORIUM, LAMBESSA

From this gate to the Decumanus Maximus, a distance of about one hundred and forty yards, ran the Cardo, another paved and porticoed street. Over the intersection of these roads stood a magnificent triumphal arch, usually, but wrongly, called the Pretorium, of which it was, in fact, only the gateway. This wonderful arch stands almost uninjured. To the north and south it had three openings, to the east and west four. Each face was adorned with Corinthian columns carrying a pediment, but these have been destroyed. Externally it gives the impression of having been two storeys in height, for over the central arch in each face is a large opening like a window; but internally there is no trace of a floor: neither, although there are vaulting shafts, is there any trace of a vault. Probably it had a wooden roof which has perished; possibly it was open to the sky.

Through this arch we pass into the Pretorium proper, the most important and interesting part of the camp. This was an enormous court or parade ground, paved, and surrounded on three sides by a colonnade. On to this colonnade opened a series of chambers which are shown by inscriptions, stones for projectiles, and other remains found in them, to have been magazines and offices of the headquarter staff.

Beyond this courtyard, on the side opposite the triumphal arch, two lateral stairs led to a second court on a higher level, of the same length as the first, but so narrow as to be little more than a terrace or vaulted antechamber to the buildings which opened on to it.

In the centre, larger, higher, and more ornate than the others, stood an apsidal chamber, or chapel, rest-

ing upon a crypt divided into five vaults ; in the middle stood an altar. This was the garrison church, in which were guarded the consecrated colours, the eagles, and other insignia of the legion.<sup>1</sup> The undercroft, which in some degree shared its sanctity, was probably the military treasury. To the right lay the *cornicubium*, to the left the orderly room of the equites ; another chamber was the *tabularium* where the records and archives were stored. Others were meeting-places for the clubs formed by the *optiones* and other inferior officers of the legion.

To the south-east lay the Thermæ. The south-west quarter is covered with the buildings and garden of the House of Correction ; this part has not been thoroughly examined, but the beauty of the mosaic floors which have been found proves that it was covered with buildings of importance, possibly the quarters of the commanding officer. The rest of the camp was occupied with the ordinary buildings necessary in a great barrack : quarters for the men, stables for the horses, guard-rooms, sheds for the chariots and military engines, stores for ammunition for the catapults, and other buildings the purpose of which cannot now be determined.

Such was a permanent Roman camp in the first century of our era.

But such a camp could not long stand alone. Soon, naturally and inevitably, it became the centre of a considerable population. First there gathered, as near as military considerations permitted, merchants, contractors, camp followers, and so on, who supplied the needs of the troops. Then the soldiers were permitted to marry, and houses were required

<sup>1</sup> There was no other temple within the camp, just as, at Timgad, there was only one, in the Forum.

for their wives and families. Then, when peace was more assured, Septimius Severus gave the married men permission to live with their families outside the camp; at last it would seem that the camp was used for military purposes only, and was left untenanted, save by the necessary guards.

And so, by the side of the camp, there grew up by degrees a great Roman town, with all that such a town needed to make it beautiful and happy. A triumphal arch to Commodus spanned the road to Timgad, and another, of three bays, to Septimius Severus, testified to the loyalty of the legionaries to the Berber Emperor. An aqueduct brought the waters of the Ain Drinn to the spacious *Thermæ*; a theatre and amphitheatre supplied amusements; a Forum for business and pleasure, temples for worship, and the town was complete.

Of the temples, the most important, here as elsewhere, was the Capitol, dedicated to the three supreme gods of Rome—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—whose vast temple looked down from the Capitoline Hill at Rome on to the busy Forum and stately Palatine. It bore testimony to all the world that here, on the extreme frontier of the Empire, *Lambæsis* was heart and soul Roman still; for with Rome then, as with England now, devotion to the Mother Country increased with distance from it, and the flame of patriotism, which burnt very dimly at home, blazed up in the distant colonies.

The Capitol of *Lambæsis* stood in the midst of a porticoed enclosure. In front, as at Rome, there were eight pillars. The Cella, which was seventy feet wide by thirty-four feet deep, was divided by a partition wall with two arches, into two chambers; at the end of each was a square niche for a statue—a most

unusual arrangement, which makes it hard to understand how the images of the three divinities were distributed.

Another temple, to Æsculapius, requires notice for the strangeness of its plan. The actual sanctuary, which held the statue of the god and of his companion Hygieia, stood, like the Temples of Cœlestis at Dougga and elsewhere, in the middle of a semi-circular portico flanked by chapels dedicated to Jupiter Valens and Silvanus, while a series of little shrines of different deities lined the north side of the avenue which led to the great temple. The mosaic floor of the second from the Temple bore the legend :

“BONUS INTRA MELIOR EXI.”

The general arrangements seem to connect the temple with Libyan worship rather than with Roman, but Eschmoun, with whom Æsculapius was identified, was a Phœnician, not a Libyan, god, and the presence of the other gods mentioned above, and the fact that the temple was built over some hot springs, seem to point to a Roman worship of the god of healing.

There were another temple and two more triumphal arches, one over the road to Verecunda (Marcouna), but their dedication is uncertain. At Verecunda, which was a sort of suburb of Lambæsis, there was another arch to Marcus Aurelius.

Such, with its dependencies, was Lambæsis, the bridle of the marauding tribes of the Sahara, as Stirling was of the turbulent Highlanders.

## CHAPTER VI

### A FRONTIER TOWN

A COLD, for the road lies nearly four thousand feet above the sea, and somewhat dreary drive of nearly twenty miles, brings us, through the folding hills of the treeless and half-desert plateau, to the Roman colony of Thamugadi (Timgad).

The town did not grow by degrees and at haphazard, as most towns do. It sprang into being all at once, like Minerva, equipped and armed, and bears upon the surface evident traces of its origin. In the year A.D. 100, Trajan, wishing to reward the Legio Ulpia Victrix for its services in his Parthian campaign, determined to establish a settlement of veterans here, and entrusted the work of preparing a home for them to the Third Legion at Lambæsis, and its commander, the Imperial Legate and Proprætor, L. Mutatius Gallus. How well the work was done the noble remains still testify.

It is usual to describe Timgad as an African Pompeii. Both are ruined towns, partly excavated, but beyond that the comparison does not take us far. Fortunate in its misfortune, Pompeii has the romance of the awful catastrophe which destroyed it, and the beauty of its matchless position between the purple sea and the vine-clad slopes of its terrible neighbour Vesuvius; Timgad stands lonely and desolate in its austere surroundings of treeless mountains and desert plain. Pompeii was a watering-place for wealthy idlers, Timgad, one of the outpost fortresses

of the Empire ; and so, in place of the large, luxurious houses of Pompeii, with their gardens and peristyles, the houses of Timgad, or, at any rate, those within the walls of the city proper, are small, compact, and cramped. In the one place all speaks of pleasure, in the other of stern defence.

Another difference is harder to account for, but it is universal, and applies not to Timgad only, but to all the cities of North Africa. The common form of decoration at Pompeii was fresco ; throughout North Africa the remains of fresco are few and unimportant,<sup>1</sup> while the number and splendour of the mosaics, on wall as well as pavement, are amazing. Some of them in Timgad have been left *in situ* ; amongst them we may notice those in the great South Thermæ and the exquisite Baptistry of the Monastery ; for the most part, the best have been placed in the Museum. The figure subjects are poor in comparison with some which have been found elsewhere, such as the Forge of Vulcan, discovered at Dougga, but others, such as the rose-pattern floor found in the house of Sertius, are so beautiful in design and so harmonious in colour that it is difficult to see how this most sumptuous of decorations could be brought to greater perfection. To compare the decorations of a small frontier town with such imperial masterpieces as the mosaics of Ravenna or Monreale, or even Venice, is hardly fair ; still, although there is no gold used, no vast wall-spaces to be filled, and no enhancement of beautiful architecture as at S. Vitale, some of the North African mosaics will stand even such a test as this.

Fortunately the town has never been used as a quarry by later builders. It survived the Vandal

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian, however, speaks of a house at Carthage, probably his own, as having frescoed walls. *Ad Don.* xv.

invasion almost uninjured, for its walls had been removed long before, and the conquerors did not, as a rule, injure the towns themselves. On the approach of the Byzantines, in A.D. 535, the natives from the mountains hastily burnt and wrecked it, to deter the enemy from settling there. Solomon, however, built a great fortress on the south slope of the hill on which the city is built, and the inhabitants seem to have crept back. The Arab invaders never settled near the spot, and so the town remains pretty much as Solomon found it—the roofs burnt, pillars and walls thrown down, but the stones left lying where they fell, covered and preserved rather than injured by the drifting sand, and waiting only to be unearthed and raised into their places again.<sup>1</sup>

The site chosen by Gallus for the new colony was on the north slope of a rather steep hill, intersected by a little stream, and commanding the entrance to the gorges of the Oued Abdi and the Oued el Abiod. Built by soldiers for soldiers and for a semi-military purpose, it is natural that in general plan it should resemble a camp, and much that has been said of Lambæsis applies to Thamugadi, except that the place of the Pretorium, in the centre of the camp, is here occupied by the Forum and theatre.

As originally designed, the town was an almost perfect square ; its sides measured three hundred and seventy yards by three hundred and forty, and faced the four points of the compass. No traces of the original walls remain ; only the gates and the broad boulevard or *Pomoerium* which surrounded the town on both sides of the walls, mark where they stood.

The gates were four in number. The principal, to the north, opened upon the *Cardo*, which led direct to the Forum, where it stopped short, or, more pre-

<sup>1</sup> This is being done by the French rapidly and with rare skill.

cisely, was deflected much to the right. From the east gate to the west ran the only thoroughfare, along which passed the great military high road from Lambæsis to Maxula (Khenchela) and Theveste (Tebessa); this was the Decumanus Maximus. It was a broad paved road, lined on each side with porticoed footpaths; its great paving-stones were, as usual, laid aslant, not at right angles to the paths, to prevent the chariot-wheels from cutting into the crevices between the stones; in spite of this precaution, it is deeply rutted, like the streets at Pompeii, the gauge of the vehicles being the same in each case.

In addition to these main roads, the town, except where the arrangement was interrupted by the Forum and theatre, was divided into identical squares, or *insulæ*, by eighteen other parallel streets, nine running in each direction.

The entire town, including the suburbs outside the walls, covered an area of about 150 acres; of these about 30 have been excavated.

Outside the north gate, which is still the principal entrance, lie the most important baths or *thermæ*, large, handsome, and complete, built with the same precise symmetry, and almost on the same plan as those of Caracalla at Rome. Just inside the gate stands, to the right, a fountain which has been completely restored, and, to the left, a little Berber Church. Higher up, to the right, a larger Basilica with atrium and Baptistery. Higher still, on the left hand, we come to one of the most beautiful and interesting buildings in the town. A graceful pillared portico opens into a semicircular shrine with niches for statues. The purpose is uncertain; perhaps it was a Schola, perhaps a library; more probably it was the *Lararium Publicum*, the Temple of the Lares, or

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ARCH OF TRAJAN



FORUM, TRAJAN

household gods, of the city. If this is correct, the central niche held a shrine of the Genius Augustus, the Emperor being represented with his toga drawn over his head, offering an oblation ; to his right and left stood the Lares of the city, in other niches, probably Ceres and Venus. This building was not a part of the original plan, for it cuts into the adjoining roads.

Where the *Cardo* meets the *Decumanus Maximus*, a flight of marble steps and a portico lead into the Forum. This is a paved court, fifty yards long by forty-four wide, surrounded on three sides by a colonnade lined with shops. Standing between the columns and encroaching on the space of the court, stood a vast assemblage of statues of gods, including, of course, Marsyas with his wine-skin, emperors, local celebrities and benefactors. At the east end lay the basilica, a fine hall of the ordinary shape—that is, square at one end, with an apse at the other. An unusual feature is that the tribunal, with seats for the judges, was at the square end. In the niche opposite stood a statue, undoubtedly of Trajan.

The west end is the most varied and interesting. In the middle, interrupting the line of the cloister, stood a little *Ædicula* or shrine, like that at the entrance of the *Atrium Vestæ* at Rome. The inscription tells us that it was erected to *Fortuna Augusta* by two sisters in accordance with the will of their father. To the south stood the *Rostra*, and, behind them, a little tetrastyle temple, probably to Victory ; in front of it stood two statues erected by a soldier of the Third Legion to commemorate the Parthian Victory of Trajan, *Victoriæ Parthicæ Augustæ Sacrum*. By the side of the temple was a little waiting-room for the use of the orators.

In the south of the temple lay the Curia, a beautiful hall adorned with marbles and mosaics ; attached to this were a guard-room and prison cells.

The south side of the Forum was occupied with shops, and a flight of steps leading up to the theatre.

On the pavement of the Forum, amongst a number of *tabulæ lusoriæ*, or little gaming-tables, which remind us of the Basilica Julia at Rome, is a curious inscription—

VENARI	LAVARI
LUDERE	RIDERE
OCC EST	VITA

“ Hunting, bathing, gambling, laughing—this is life.”  
A variation of the old epitaph—

CORPORA CORRUMPUNT  
BALNEUM VINUM VENUS  
SED VITAM FACIUNT

“ The bath, wine, love, destroy the body, but make life worth living.”

Above the Forum lies the theatre, the Auditorium, as usual, when practicable, being hollowed out of the crest of the hill. The seats had been displaced and the pillars had fallen, but these have been restored, and it is now, with the exception of that at Dougga, the handsomest and most complete theatre in North Africa. Enough will be said on this subject elsewhere.

To the east of the Forum, in the Decumanus, lies a graceful little market. From the street-portico an apse opens into a court, the far side of which is formed by two semicircular arcades, each divided into five stalls or shops. The front of each of these is closed by a stone slab or table, under or over which the merchant had to climb. The point where the two arcades meet, opposite the entrance, was occupied by

an altar; in the court itself were two semicircular basins, either fountains or flower-beds.

Adjoining the market are some small thermæ and a tiny Basilica. Other thermæ stand lower down the street near the east gate.

Over the Decumanus, where it enters the city on the west, rises the magnificent arch called the Arch of Trajan. It received its name from some inscriptions which have been found near it; judging, however, from the architecture, it was probably not erected until about A.D. 200. It has three openings, like that of Constantine at Rome. The small lateral arches are surmounted by square-headed niches for statues. In front stood four Corinthian columns resting upon lofty bases. They rose to the height of the central arch and carried a bold cornice, which, running in a straight line over the main entrance, bent into graceful curves over the lateral niches. The attic has vanished.

With the exception of that at Tebessa, it is the most perfect and beautiful of all the countless triumphal arches of North Africa.

Outside the arch, to the right, lay the temple of the genius of the colony. "GENIO COLONIAE THAMUG," so runs the inscription on an altar.

Three flights of steps led from the street into the very irregularly shaped court of the temple. Round it was a colonnade containing a number of statues of gods: Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Bacchus, Mars, Liber Pater, Silvanus, Deus Patrius, and others. In the centre stood the altar; behind this, raised upon a lofty podium, was the Cella, which has perished; four of the columns of its porch have, however, been re-erected.

On the other side of the road lay the great market.

This, as numerous inscriptions tell us, was the gift of Marcus Plotius Faustus, surnamed Sertius—a Roman knight, an officer of the auxiliary troops, a Priest of Rome, and Flamen of the Emperor—and of his wife, Cornelia Valentina Tucciana. It was a large, handsome court, surrounded as usual by a colonnade. In the centre was a fountain ; at the north end stood six shops. At the opposite end two steps led up into a great apse like the tribunal of a basilica ; round this, spreading out like a fan, were seven shops, each closed by a big stone counter like those of the eastern market. Close by was another, the cloth market, *Forum Vestiarium*, and some more thermæ.

Higher up still, and dominating the city from the brow of the hill, rose the huge mass of the magnificent Capitol. We enter it by a vast porch, erected, after the destruction of the old one, by Publilius Ceironius Cæcina Julianus, a man of senatorial rank and governor of the province of Numidia. The other three porticoes which surrounded the court of the temple and were erected at the same time, have fallen. The work is late and bad. The court itself measures nearly one hundred yards by seventy, and is barbarously paved with carved and inscribed pieces of friezes and architraves and other fragments. In the centre stood an immense altar ; beyond it, at the top of a flight of thirty steps, rose the temple itself. Its proportions, though not to be compared with those of the temple at Girgenti, where a man can stand in one of the flutings of the columns, are considerable. Technically, the temple is what is called hexastyle peripteral stylobate—that is, there were six columns in front, and a complete colonnade of similar detached columns ran round the building, which stood upon a platform or *podium*. Each column was forty feet

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CAPITOL, DOUGGA



CAPITOL, SBEITLA

high, the capital adding another six feet; they are therefore about the same size as those of the *Templum Castorum* in the Forum at Rome. The Cella of the temple had three niches for the great Roman triad, or else was divided into three chambers. The central statue of Jupiter was twenty-three feet high. This statue, which is now in the Louvre, was seated; the other two—that of Juno to his right, and Minerva to his left—were standing.

This was the normal form of a Roman capitol. It was departed from for some reason at Lambæsis. A more splendid form still is found in the magnificent Capitol at Sufetula (Sbeitla). There the immense court, one hundred and eighty yards long by eighty wide, was so strong that it was afterwards converted into a Byzantine fortress. It was entered by a noble monumental gateway dedicated to Antoninus Pius; round it, on three sides, ran a double cloister. Opposite the entrance gateway, instead of a single temple with three niches, stood three distinct temples separated by handsome gateways. The central sanctuary is composite; the other two, which are smaller, are Corinthian; the work throughout is excellent.

One of the smallest, and certainly the loveliest, of these temples is at Thugga (Dougga). The inevitable inscription informs us that it was built in honour of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, and Minerva Augusta, by two brothers, Lucius Marcius Simplex and Lucius Marcius Simplex Regillanus, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. In the centre of the pediment, which rests on four columns, is a curious carving of an eagle carrying a man up to heaven, probably an imperial apotheosis. Standing at the top of the almost precipitous hill on which the city is built, and silhouetted against the sky, this

little temple is perhaps the most beautiful ruin in Africa.

"Minervæ Augustæ." This epithet of "Augustus" is very commonly applied not only to emperors, but also to deities and to those personified virtues to which, or to whom, the Romans were fond of dedicating temples ever since the day when, in 354 B.C., Atilius Calatinus dedicated the Temple of Hope, the ruins of which now lie under the Church of S. Nicolo in Carcere at Rome.

At Dougga the neighbouring temple is dedicated to "Cœlesti Aug.," another is to "Pietati Augustæ," another to "Fortunæ Augustæ." At Tebessa we read "Apollini Aug. Thevestin," and again "Virtuti Aug. Thevest." "Saturno Augusto" is the usual phrase on the votive tablets which are found, literally, in hundreds. At Lambæsis we find "Genio Virtutum Marti Augusto"; another, "Genio Augusto." This introduces another interesting word "Genius," and this also is common. We have noticed one at Timgad, "Genio Coloniae Thamugadensium;" the Capitol at Lambessa is dedicated "Genio Lambæsis," as well as to the great triad. This cult of Genii, a sort of pre-Christian guardian angel or patron saint, became universal in the Roman Empire, as it still is in the Roman Church; every community or association of men, for whatever purpose, political or professional, had one.<sup>1</sup> At Rome a special shield to the Genius of the city hung in the Capitol, bearing the comprehensive inscription with which many are familiar on the altar at the foot of the Palatine Hill—"SEI DEO SEI DEIVÆ SACRUM." It is little wonder that from the Imperial city it spread even to the little towns of distant Africa.

<sup>1</sup> In the Forum at Rome is a slab inscribed "Genio aquarum."

Such then in part was Timgad ; in part only, for nothing has been said of its great monastery or huge Byzantine fortress, or, even more important still, the numerous fountains which adorned the public streets and testified to the abundant supply of water. And, be it remembered, Timgad was never a large or important city. To us it is interesting because the circumstances of its foundation left its builders free to carry out their plans unembarrassed by conditions of space, or consideration for existing buildings ; and more especially because the remoteness of its site and the circumstances of its decay have saved its ruins from later destruction, and from being drawn upon for the erection of more modern towns.

## CHAPTER VII

### COUNTRY LIFE

*Mare sævum, littus importuosum, ager frugum fertilis, bonus pecori, arbori infecundus cælo terraque penuria aquarum.*<sup>1</sup> "A dangerous sea, a coast with few harbours, good arable and pasture land, but badly wooded owing to shortage of water, insufficient rainfall, and a scarcity of springs or rivers." Such was Sallust's description of North Africa, when he saw it before the Roman occupation had become effective; and it is true and exact now that the Golden Age has passed away. Now, as it was then and always will be, the difficulty is the water supply. The land, even the sand of the Sahara, is fertile; all it needs is water—as in the vision of Ezekiel, "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." This difficulty the Romans faced and overcame with astonishing energy, perseverance, and success.

To-day, after thirteen hundred years of Arab devastation and neglect, recovery seems to be, and largely is, hopeless. It is difficult, even in imagination, to recall the days when, to Horace,<sup>2</sup> an African farm was a synonym for boundless fertility, prosperity, and wealth. Hour after hour, sometimes day after day, the traveller passes through desert and treeless, because waterless, wastes. From the hills which

<sup>1</sup> Jug. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. "Si proprio condidit horreo  
Quicquid de Libycis verritur areis."—*Carm.* ii. 11.

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CEDAR FOREST AT BLIDAH



skirt the horizon, stripped of their forest clothing by fire and wanton destruction, the rains have washed down all the soil into the plains below; and now they rise against the sky grim and barren, mere splintered skeletons of what they once were, but can never be again. Here and there some relics of their former glories remain. Splendid cedars still tassel the heights of Teniet-el-Had in the Ouarsenis, of Tourgour and above Khenchela in the Aures, and of the Atlas above Blidah. Vast forests of cork-trees still clothe the Djebel Edough near Bône, and the beautifully wooded gorge of the Medjerba, between Souk Ahras and Mdaourouch, gives an idea of what North Africa was in the days of its prosperity.

Originally, what is now an exception must have been, in many parts, the rule. Large tracts of mountain and plain, now barren and treeless, must have been well wooded with forest or jungle. Elephants<sup>1</sup> were common and formed the strength of the Carthaginian armies; Juba lost the battle of Thapsus because his elephants had only recently been brought in, wild, from the forests and were untrained for war—*bellorum rudes et nuperi a silvâ*; <sup>2</sup> wild animals, especially deer, abounded; the mosaics in the houses show us pictures of hunting scenes in which the game are not only hares and deer, but lions, tigers, leopards, and wild boar. At Kef (Sicca Veneria) Flaubert places his historically true episode of the multitude of crucified lions; not only the amphitheatres of

<sup>1</sup> The word "elephant" is Libyan, "Fil," adopted by the Greeks, first as "Ephelas" then as "Elephas." I have found no representation of elephants in mosaic.

The first notice that I can find of camels is that Cæsar's booty after the battle of Thapsus included twenty-two camels. Later on, in the third and fourth centuries, the Roman generals in Tripoli requisitioned them by thousands for the carriage of water.

<sup>2</sup> Flor. vi. 2, 67.

Africa, but even the Colosseum of Rome, were supplied from these sources.

Still, in spite of the amount of forest which this implies, and the fact that, so far as Punic occupation extended, the cultivation of the country had been thorough and scientific, the difficulties which the Romans had to face were serious, and they met them in the only possible way—by the systematic storage and distribution of the water.

Not less wonderful than the countless ruins of cities and private houses are the ruined waterworks—ruins which strew not only the fertile plains, but also the high desolate plateaux, where to-day the half-nomad Berbers find it hard to eke out an existence. Every stream or river which now pours its wasted waters into *chott* or sand or sea, shows signs of having been carefully barraged at frequent intervals, and the water distributed far and wide by subsidiary canals. Every country-house had its wells and tanks, every city and town its vast system of cisterns and aqueducts.<sup>1</sup> Carthage drew its supply from the hills of Zaghuan, sixty miles away; the arches of its aqueduct can still be seen striding across the plain near Oudna, and the tunnels bored through the intervening hills are still in use for their old purpose; the enormous cisterns where the water was stored still exist at La Malga and near Bordj-el-Djedid; the latter are still in use, the former house a colony of natives and their cattle.

At El Djem (Thysdrus), where now the lonely amphitheatre rises forlorn in the midst of a desert, an inscription tells us that a certain magistrate brought

<sup>1</sup> Aqueducts have been found at Constantine, Timgad, Lambessa, Sbeitla, Dougga, Khamissa, Tebessa, Chemtou, Souk-el-Arba, Mactar Simittu, Oued Maliz, Cherchel, and Tipasa.



AQUEDUCT AT CHERCHEL



water in such abundance that, after providing for the wants of a city with a population of about a hundred thousand, enough remained to supply private houses on payment of a water-rate, *aqua adducta . . . coloniae sufficiens et per plateas lacubus impertita, domibus etiam certa conditione concessa*.<sup>1</sup> Another inscription found at Guelma (Calama) tells how "in the most blessed times of our Lords Valentinian and Valens (A.D. 364-375)," a tank which had formerly received only a tiny trickle of water, now overflowed with "waters which roared like thunder," owing to the restorations effected by "Quintus Bacilius Flaccianus, Perpetual Flamen, Augur and Curator Reipublicæ."<sup>2</sup> Inscriptions of the same kind abound elsewhere;<sup>3</sup> but these instances are sufficient to illustrate what was going on everywhere.

On agricultural questions, the Romans, profiting by the experience of their predecessors, took as their guide the writings of the Carthaginian, Magon. In the broken land and clearings they bred sheep and goats, saddle-horses and huge oxen, strong to labour. Olives, date-palms, and figs yielded their fruit; the vine was cultivated for raisins as well as for wine; in the deep soil of the plains they grew corn, so luxuriant that Pliny<sup>4</sup> tells us of a procurator who sent to Augustus a single ear containing four hundred grains, and in such quantities that Africa became the granary of Rome. Thence came the *annona*,<sup>5</sup> the daily bread of the vast capital, which was so dependent upon it

<sup>1</sup> C.I.L. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5335.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. C.I.L. 8809, found at Bordj bou Areridj. Also C.I.L. 440.

<sup>4</sup> H.N. xviii. 21. Another, containing 360 grains, was sent to Nero.

<sup>5</sup> The *annona* or *annona militaris* was originally the supply requisitioned for an army on active service, and raised by an Imperial decree, or *indictio*. It was made an annual contribution in A.D. 289. Africa was assessed at one and a half million bushels of wheat.

that the man who held Africa could starve Rome. So precious was this supply that it was deified and became a goddess; <sup>1</sup> the vast granaries which we still see at Ostia were built to contain it; it set the worthless, unemployable rabble of Rome free to amuse themselves in circus or amphitheatre. <sup>2</sup> What Canada and America are to England, that, and more, Africa was to Rome.

As the country had been conquered, the land was treated as the property of the victors. Large tracts, especially in the neighbourhood of the towns, were divided into farms, and either sold to great Roman capitalists or assigned to the veteran legionaries who were planted there to colonise the country. The natives were in such cases either deported to other parts of the province or driven up into the mountains, to be for ever a standing menace to the plains. If they were allowed to remain, they had to be content to cultivate the waste, because poorer, lands, living in their little *mapalia*, or huts, like Peggotty's boat at Yarmouth, *quasi navium carinæ*. <sup>3</sup>

But this did not last long. Even in those days when "competition," as we know it, could hardly be said to exist, a man did not become a skilful farmer simply by being put in possession of a small holding. In Italy one agrarian law had soon to be followed by another; and in Africa the small farmers were soon swallowed up by the great landowners, such as Pompeianus at Oued Atmenia; the Pullæni, who dis-

<sup>1</sup> She is represented in statues with shoulder and arms bare, a crescent on her head, spikes of corn in one hand and a cornucopia in the other. The great relief of Abundance at Carthage is not unlike one of these fanciful representations. In the Capitol at Rome is an altar inscribed, "Annonæ Sanctæ Ælius Vitulus."

<sup>2</sup> "Parce et messoribus illis

Qui saturant urbem circo scenæque vacantem."—Juv. viii. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Jug. xviii.

possessed the Marian veterans at Uci Majus ; the Arrii Antonini at Mileve ; or the Lollii at Oued Smendu near Constantine. It was in Africa that Cælius gathered the fortune which his son wasted. Cornelius Nepos<sup>1</sup> tells us of a certain Julius Calidus who was prosecuted in order that his immense possessions in Africa might be confiscated. An inscription informs us that Julius Martianus, who had commanded the Third Legion as Legate of Numidia, had great possessions, on which he held a market, at Mascula (Khenchela). Meanwhile the old independent yeomen either deserted the land or became *conductores* or tenant farmers ; and by the same process the free *coloni* or peasants sank gradually into the position of serfs (*vernulæ*), tied to the soil and bought and sold with it, or gave up the struggle in despair and flocked into the towns to swell the ranks of the unemployed, and to be fed and amused at the town's expense.

Writing in the first century of our era, the elder Pliny<sup>2</sup> deploras the change as the ruin of the Empire. "The Latifundia," he says, "have destroyed Italy ; they will soon have destroyed the colonies also." So early as in the time of Nero, he adds, six men owned half the province of Africa. The Emperor, he goes on to say, killed them all and seized their estates. To estimate the size of these great properties is difficult ; the French Concession of three hundred thousand acres at Enfidaville would probably be a fair modern parallel. The villa of Hadrian, near Tivoli, with its baths, theatre, library, pæcile, and canals, would give a not very exaggerated idea of the vast palaces which stood on them. Ringed round with villages for the slaves and other employés, we are told that they looked more like towns

<sup>1</sup> Vit. Att. xii.

<sup>2</sup> H.N. xviii. 75.

than private houses. "Præstant multarum urbium faciem."

Everything that we see combines to give an idea of wonderful prosperity and wealth. Everywhere we find aqueducts, cisterns, and barrages, telling us of practical common sense and of wealth worthily used. Temples, theatres, triumphal arches, amphitheatres, circuses, thermæ, bear testimony to a vigorous municipal life and ardent patriotism in the country and in the towns, and to the wealth and liberality of the people. In the cool halls of the private houses fountains played, the bright colours of flowers glowed in marble stands,<sup>1</sup> and the walls and floors were inlaid with mosaics, which, in richness and variety of pattern and wonderful harmony of colour, have never been surpassed. All tells of ease and luxury, of a society peaceful and satisfied, tranquil and untroubled, going about its daily work with well-ordered industry, and reserving the best of its hours for rest, pleasure, and amusement—a life of refined, enervating ease.

Fortunately, although the great country-houses have perished, we are not left without guidance in forming an idea of their appearance, and of the occupations of their inhabitants. Africa is, above all others, a land of mosaics, and what the inscriptions are to the towns, the mosaics are to the country. And so, taking these for our guides, let us try to picture the daily life and surroundings of one of these country magnates, of the men who laid them down, and trod them day by day. The best are, for the most part, preserved in museums—in the Bardo at Tunis, at Sousse, Timgad, Tebessa, and elsewhere. This is fortunate and necessary, for most of them

<sup>1</sup> A very beautiful example of this is to be found in a house at the corner of the Forum at Timgad, known as that of *La Jardinière*.

rested upon little pillars over hypocausts—that is, hot-air chambers—and so were liable to be broken, even without the assistance of the omnipresent Arab treasure-hunter.

For the most part, and this is significant, they deal with outdoor, not with indoor life. In the Bardo at Tunis is one of the few which belong to the latter class. It represents a dinner-party: nine tables have been laid, at each of which sit three guests, all men. In the centre, men are dancing to an accompaniment of drums, pipes, and large metal cymbals and castanets. We can still hear the same music, played on the same instruments, by the negro clowns from the Soudan.

In another way these mosaics help us to picture the homes of the wealthy Romans, by giving us an idea of the size of the rooms they were designed for. Many of them must have been large, some very large. One mosaic, representing the Triumph of Neptune, comes from Sousse; it measures seventy feet by fifty-four. For the most part, these houses were like mediæval palaces—spacious reception-rooms, and small rooms to live in.

As already said, the majority of the mosaics deal with outdoor life and sports. A large example, found at El Djem, and remarkable for the freedom and excellence of the drawing, gives a series of hunting scenes. The first shows us two men on horseback with a beater between them. The horses are bridled, but have no saddles. The riders are bare-headed, and hold whips in their hands, but they are unarmed, as they are hunting nothing more formidable than a hare. The second contains two scenes; first we see a keeper scarcely able, with all his strength, to hold in two large hounds who are straining at the leash;

then the hounds are slipt, and are baying at a hare which is lying in its form. The last represents the kill. The two hunters are in full cry, and the hounds are close upon the hare, which—a curiously natural touch—has doubled back to the form.

Bathing and fishing were favourite subjects. In one mosaic a number of boys are bathing. One stands hesitating on the bank; another has taken a header, and is just striking the water; another is swimming with a long, easy side-stroke; while another is being swallowed by a huge fish. Yet another is fishing from the bank and has just hooked a big octopus.

Mosaics which represent fishing are common, but, as a rule, they treat it as a bit of work and business, not of amusement or pleasure. It is done with long heavy nets which are being dragged in, usually by men, but in one case by oxen.

From Tabarka comes a series of three semicircular mosaics, which originally filled the recesses of a tre-foiled room. They represent a farm, and all the varied work connected with it. In the centre of one is a large building with two towers and great open gateways; it stands in a rose-garden, planted with olive-trees, under which pigeons, pheasants, and partridges<sup>1</sup> are feeding; below is a lake with swans, geese, and ducks, swimming, drinking, or flapping their wings. A second shows us the farm with olives, vines, and pigeons. The third gives the stables; horses are tied up ready to be groomed; in the corner a woman is sitting spinning; all round are olives and vines, with sheep and partridges.

Another, still more elaborate, shows men ploughing; a shepherd is folding his flock of sheep and goats; a horse is being groomed; another is being watered,

<sup>1</sup> Or, it may be, guinea fowl.

at just such a well as we still see in the fields ; a man, on his hands and knees, disguised, apparently, in a skin, is driving partridges into a great snare net ; men and dogs are chasing a wild boar which has turned at bay ; other men, on horseback, are hunting a tiger ; while more gentle swains are sitting under the trees piping to their flocks.

By far the most complete and interesting series of such mosaics was discovered in 1878 at Oued Atmenia, about twenty miles from Constantine on the road to Setif. Unfortunately they have been entirely destroyed by the Arabs in their search for treasure ; but before this they were carefully examined and copied by the Archæological Society of Constantine. Some have been reproduced in colour by the Society. Two are shown by Tissot in his *Géographie comparée de la Province Romaine d'Afrique*.

The building first discovered was the Thermæ ; this was so vast and splendid that it was thought that it must belong to some large town ; but further excavations proved that this was not the case, and that it was simply part of a private house belonging to a man called Pompeianus.

In the Laconicum, or hot chamber, the mosaic is divided into four compartments, one above another. The upper two show the house and garden, the other two the favourite horses from the stud of the owner.

In front is the house with the owner's name over it, POMPEIANUS. It is a timbered structure, very Elizabethan in appearance. The main building is two storeys high, with a lofty roof ; in the centre is a parapeted tower rising to the height of four storeys—that is, one storey clear above the roof of the house itself. At the two extremities are projecting wings, also with high roofs. Beyond these are two pavilions or porches,

opening into the garden which lies behind ; over these are palm-trees. The garden itself is a *hortus inclusus* walled in, and laid out in beds of a stiff, formal geometrical pattern ; in the middle of the back wall is a sort of Casino or summer-house.

Below, in the other two rows, are six horses tied to mangers ; in each row two horses share a manger, while the third has one to himself ; as usual, over each horse is its name, sometimes with a few words of praise or affection. In the first row are DELICATUS, with a manger to himself ; then PULLENTIANUS and ALTUS. The last is thus apostrophised : "ALTUS UNUS ES UT MONS EXULTAS"—"Altus, there is none like you ; you skip like a mountain"—a curiously biblical metaphor.<sup>1</sup> In the bottom row are SCHOLASTICUS, by himself, TITAS and POLYDOXUS. While Altus was the favourite hunter, Polydorus was evidently the favourite race-horse. Over him we read : "VINCAS NON VINCAS TE AMAMUS POLYDOXE"—"Whether you win, or not, we love you, Polydorus."

From the Laconicum a door leads into the Sudarium, or sweating-room. On the floor near the door are the cryptic words, "INCREDULA VENILA BENEFICA."

In the Sudarium itself are two mosaics. Over the first are the words, "FILOSO FILOLOCUS." The simplest explanation is that they stand for *Philosophi Locus*, "The Place of the Philosopher," but it is hard to believe that in such elaborate work as this, two mistakes should have been made, and allowed to stand, in two words. Still, the obvious is not always wrong, and it is hard to suggest any other interpretation.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxiv. *Montes exsultaverunt ut arietes apparent*. This acquaintance with the Bible does not, of course, prove that Pompeianus was a Christian, but the fact that the words were sufficiently well known to be thus used is interesting.

If this be the case, the incomprehensible words above may be mistakes also.

The mosaic represents a garden or *Viridarium*; on each side are trees; the background is green. To the left are three pavilions brightly coloured; to the right, under a palm-tree, laden with ripe fruit, a lady is sitting in an armchair (*cathedra*), holding a fan (*flabellum*) in her right hand. By her side stands an attendant; with his left hand he holds a parasol (*umbella*) over the lady's head; in his right, the leash of a little pet dog; behind are other trees, with vines and bunches of grapes. Can this scene of idle ease represent the School of Philosophy, as understood in the country-house of Pompeianus, and can the attendant be the philosopher himself? It is quite possible. We know that every big house kept its private philosopher, just as a nobleman used to keep his private chaplain or jester; and the poor philosopher was put to very base uses and treated with as scant respect or consideration as a Court chaplain received from the wife of one of the Georges.

The other mosaic in the Laconicum, separated from the first by the wall of the garden, represents the park.

At the top are two circular basins with fish and aquatic plants in flower; above are the words, "SEPTUM VENATIONIS," the "Park or Enclosure for Hunting." It is ringed in with a high deer-fence or net supported by strong stakes. Inside are three gazelles chased by a couple of hounds. The smallness of the space enclosed, and the absence of any hunters, give the impression that it is a snare for catching deer rather than a place for hunting them.

By the side of this enclosure for deer is another

for cattle—"PECUARI LOCUS,"<sup>1</sup> the "Place of the Herdsman." This part of the mosaic is injured, almost destroyed.

Adjoining is the Atrium. Here the mosaic shows a hunting-lodge, or possibly the great house itself, and hunting scenes.

The house at the top of the mosaic is two or three storeys high, and is flanked on one side by a rich pavilion, on the other by a lofty tower and balcony; above this is written, "SALTUARIJ JANUS," "The Ranger's Gate."

The roof, above which are trees, is of red tiles (*tegulæ*); in the roof of the central building are four openings, in red and black. What they are is not clear; if we could be sure they were chimneys, the question whether Roman houses had chimneys or not would be settled, and, with it, the meaning of the word *caminus*.

Below, in three rows, we see a party hunting gazelles. It consists of horsemen with spears in their hands: CRESCONIUS, VERNACIL, CESSONIUS, NEANTUS. In front are the hounds FIDELIS and CASTUS, while close up to the hounds, in his proper place, rides POMPEIANUS himself, the only one who is unarmed. Others, beaters, are on foot—LIBER, DIAZ, and an Iberian boy who, like Liber, has thrown his short mantle, *sagum*, loose over his left shoulder. The horses are saddled, bridled, and fully caparisoned. The riders are lightly clad; they wear flat bonnets (*galeri*), entirely covering the head, short mantles thrown back over the shoulder like hussars' jackets, and trousers tied in at the knees. At the close of the hunt, the hunters are invited to rest under the pleasant shade of trees.

<sup>1</sup> Another misprint for PECUARIJ.

Also in the Atrium are two other strange mosaics. In each are three women, naked, save that long mantles hang from their shoulders down their backs; round their necks are strings of pearls, and they wear bangles on their arms, wrists, and ankles. The woman in the middle of one of these mosaics holds a sunshade in her right hand. They sit on carved couches, two of the legs of which represent the head and legs of a stag or some fantastic animal; the others are a series of balls, increasing in size as they approach the ground.

Apart from these last two mosaics, and making some necessary allowance for the inevitable conventionality of treatment, we cannot but be struck, not only by the very pleasant, but also by the singularly modern picture which all this gives us of the daily life of the Roman gentry. We should only have to take the lady away from her walled garden and her philosopher, and put her on horseback by the side of her husband.

All this, pleasant and attractive as it is, gives, unhappily, only one side of the picture—the life of the rich; that is, of the few. There was another side very different and very cruel, of which we know little—the deep sighing of the poor, the death in life of the slaves. Of these latter a few, the most favoured, were attached to the personal service of their masters. The vast majority worked and died in the fields under the lash of their taskmasters. We must imagine for ourselves the hopeless horror of their lives; perhaps the most awful comment upon it is that no record remains. Their misery must be measured by the luxury of their masters, their poverty by the wealth of Africa, their hopelessness by their silence.

Besides these private estates, there were the

Imperial domains or *saltus*, a word which is interpreted by Ælius Gallus as meaning wood and pasture land (*saltus est ubi silvæ et pastiones sunt*). Pliny has told us how the Emperor Nero became possessed of some of these ; others passed into the Imperial hands in a more normal way. In every colony a part of the land was reserved as public or common land (*publicus ager*), and it was, perhaps, natural that, especially in Crown colonies, this should in time come to be considered and treated as the property of the Emperor himself.

On the hills which surround the valleys of the Oueds Arkou, Memcha, and Ermouchia, between Dougga and Kef, lay a cluster of these *saltus*—the Blandiensis, Udensis, Lamianus, Domitianus, and Sustritanus. Each of these was managed by an Imperial agent or *procurator*, under a procurator-general who had his office at Carthage. Under the procurator were the *conductores*, or tenant farmers, to whom the farms were let on a five years' lease, with the right of sub-letting. The relations of these were governed by the standing law of Hadrian—the *Forma Perpetua* or Model Lease ; copies of this, accompanied sometimes by a sort of commentary, giving the details of the local usage, have been found in various places, engraved on slabs or pillars or altars.

Here is one of the commentaries,<sup>1</sup> discovered by Dr. Carton, near a spring called the Ain Ouarsel, not far from Uci Majus :

“ See how our Cæsar, with untiring solicitude, watches over the interests of mankind.

“ 1. Concerning all the lands planted with olives or other fruit-trees in the centuries of the *Saltus Blan-*

<sup>1</sup> *Le Pays de Dougga*, G. Balut, p. 62. A copy of the Law of Hadrian is inscribed on an altar.

dianus and Udensis, and in the parts of the Saltus Lamianus and Domitianus, which adjoin the Saltus Sustritanus :

“Neither the fact that they cultivate these centuries, nor the fact that they hold them from the *conductores*, gives to the occupants the right of possession, to enjoy their revenues or to leave them by will to their heirs, a right which the Law of Hadrian gives to virgin soil and to land which has lain waste for ten consecutive years.

“2. On the other hand, the crops on the lands in the Saltus Blandianus and Udensis, let by the *conductores* to the occupants, shall not be more heavily rented than in the past. The rent shall be one-third of the produce of the land.

“So also the parts of the Saltus Lamianus and Domitianus adjoining the Saltus Sustritanus shall pay the same rent as in time past.

“3. If one of the *possessores* shall plant or graft olives, the produce shall be free from all impost for the first ten years.

“In the same way, fruit-trees shall not be taxed for the first seven years after they have been planted or grafted.

“In any case, the fruit of trees which are not thus exempt shall not be taxed unless the said fruits are sold by the *possessores*.

“The rents arising from the dry products of the soil shall be paid by the *occupatorius* for the five years following the cropping of the land, into the hands of the *conductor* who occupies the land.

“After that time, they pass into the hands of the State.”

. . . . .

Besides these tenants and sub-tenants there were the *coloni*, the peasantry, for the most part natives,

who occupied such land as no one else wanted. These men were drifting fast from the position of peasants into that of serfs, attached to and almost belonging to the soil. Since the soil belonged to the Emperor, they claimed that they also, in a sense, were his, and had therefore a claim upon him and a right of appeal to him. It is curiously like the *Clameur de Haro*, with which a suppliant Norman cried to the first pirate duke that wrong was being done: "*Haro! Haro! A l'aide, mon Prince, on me fait tort.*"<sup>1</sup>

In addition to some rent, which of course varied with the circumstances, they were obliged to give six days a year free labour, or *corvée*, to the farmers, at the busiest times of the year—two for ploughing, two for sowing, and two for harvesting. It is easy to understand that this opened the door to much unjust exaction and oppression. A curious memorial of this has been discovered on the Saltus Bururitanus (Henchir Dacla, near Souk-el-Kemis) in the valley of the Medjerba, inscribed on slabs of marble which are now in the Bardo at Tunis.<sup>2</sup>

Resenting the unjust exactions of the farmers, and despairing of obtaining justice of the procurators, the peasants determined to appeal direct to the Emperor himself. Their first letter fell into the hands of the Procurator-General at Carthage, who, furious at finding his administration thus impugned, sent soldiers to the spot, who imprisoned or flogged the audacious complainants.

Nothing daunted, the *coloni* sent another appeal which reached the Emperor. In this they describe themselves as his people, *vernulæ*, born upon his land, *alumni saltuum tuorum*, and give an account of their wrongs. An autograph reply came from the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> *Roucn*, by T. A. Cook, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> C.I.L. 10570.

himself, righting their wrongs, and insisting that the Law of Hadrian should be respected, and no more free labour exacted from them than was due. And this Emperor was Commodus the Gladiator.

If in 1864 the negroes of Jamaica had had equally easy access to the throne, a very ugly page would have been blotted out from our history.

Overjoyed, the peasants had their letter and the Emperor's answer, the new Magna Carta of their liberties, engraved on slabs of marble, and set up on the estate.

The Emperor's reply deserves to be given at length :—

(IMP CA)ES M AURELIUS COMMODUS AN  
(TONI)NUS AUG SARMAT GERMANICUS  
MAXIMUS LURIO LUCULLO ET NOMIN A  
LIORUM PROCC CONTEMPLATIONE DIS  
CIPLINÆ ET INSTITUTI MEI NE PLUS  
QUAM TER BINAS OPERAS CURABUNT  
NE QUIT PER INJURIAM CONTRA PERPE  
TUAM FORMAN A VOBIS EXIGATUR  
ET ALIA MANU SCRIPSI RECOGNOVI.

“The Emperor Cæsar Marcus Aurelius Commodus Antoninus, Augustus, Sarmaticus Germanicus Maximus, to Lurius Lucullus and the other procurators : In conformance with my direction and ordinance, you shall not exact more than two days' free labour, thrice in the year, or inflict any injury contrary to the standing orders. This and the rest I have written with my own hand and verified.”

It will be easily understood that the management of these vast estates required the services of an immense staff of officials. Two cemeteries have been

discovered at Carthage, near the cisterns of Malga, set apart, one for the free men, the other for the slaves attached to the Administration. Two hundred and eighty-nine epitaphs have been discovered in the one cemetery, two hundred and ninety-five in the other.

The strange construction of some of these tombs, with funnels for libations, and the still stranger use to which these funnels were put, will be noticed elsewhere.

The epitaphs are interesting as supplying us with the titles of the various members of this Imperial Familia.

First come the *Procuratores*, or Imperial agents; then there come the *Pedisequi* or runners, and *Medici*, doctors who were attached to the persons of the great officials. Others were office clerks, *Notarii*, or *Librarii*, or *Tabularii*; others surveyors, *Mensores* or *Agrimensores* and *Agrarii*: many are soldiers, others *Pædagogi*, one a philosopher, another a nurse, another a dancer. These were all free, and probably Roman citizens, even if they did not come from Rome. The messengers and couriers, *Collegium Cursorum et Numidarum*, were natives and, probably, slaves.

It is interesting to note that some of these Imperial officers were Christians. Here is the epitaph of one of them—

FORTUNATUS  
IN PACE PROCU  
RATOR FUNDI  
BENBENNESIS.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE IN THE TOWN

THE traveller in Eastern Algeria and Tunisia cannot fail to be impressed by the enormous number of ruined Roman towns which he passes, and the density of the population to which they bear witness. Sometimes the very name of the ruins is forgotten ; sometimes an inscription reveals the name, but everything else is lost ; sometimes a ruined arch or huge monument such as the amphitheatre of Thysdrus (El Djem) rises in the midst of a desert, like the temples of Egypt. A single day's drive from Medjez-el-Bab (Membressa) to Kef (Sicca Vineria) carries us through no less than twenty towns, and even this takes no account of the private and Imperial estates, the *prædia*, *fundi*, and *saltus* which lay between them. The thickness of the population was, of course, uneven ; it depended upon the supply of water and the distance from the sea. This latter point may be stated almost in terms of the law of gravitation, the number and importance of the towns varying inversely with the square of the distance from Carthage or some other seaport. It is difficult, almost impossible, to realise now, as we pass through leagues of treeless waste, by ranges of bare rocky hills, that those hills were once clothed with forests, that those plains once supported a teeming population, and were the granary of Rome.

And not less remarkable than the number must have been the splendour of these cities. A single

illustration of this must suffice,—the Triumphal Arches which are so marked a feature of the Roman ruins. Other buildings, theatres, amphitheatres, fora, temples, aqueducts, were more or less necessary, and ministered to the pleasures, if not to the absolute requirements, of the people; these arches were purely ornamental, and so bear a clearer witness simply to the wealth and taste and liberality of those who erected them. Often only a foundation is left; sometimes, as with the great four-fronted arch at Constantine, only a tradition remains; sometimes, as at Medjez-el-Bab (the Ford of the Gate), only the name now tells us of the gateway outside which Belisarius defeated the rebel Stotzas.

Often these arches are only ornamental gateways in an existing city or temple wall, or carry an aqueduct, recalling the Porta Maggiore or the so-called Arch of Drusus at Rome; such are found at Lambessa, at Tebessa, and in the Capitol of Sbeitla. But more frequently they stand in solitary grandeur entirely detached from any other building.

Commonly they have only one opening, like the Arch of Titus at Rome, but even these are often of great dignity and beauty; such are the Arches of Diocletian at Sufetula (Sbeitla), of Commodus at Lambæsis (Lambessa), of M. Aurelius at Verecunda, one of the Arches at Tibilis (Announa), and especially the very splendid Arch of Septimius Severus at Ammœdara (Haidra).

And here it may be remembered that Severus was himself an African, born at Leptis, and had therefore a double claim on the loyalty of Africans, Roman and Berber.

Very rarely these arches had two openings, but it was found difficult to treat this form successfully, and

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ARCH OF CARACALLA, TEBESSA

it was hardly ever adopted ; a solitary instance is to be found at Thibilis (Announa)—the only one, at any rate, that the present writer has found.

A more elaborate form has three openings ; to this class belong the Arch of Septimius Severus at Lambæsis, the entrance Arch of the Capital of Sufetula (Sbeitla), dedicated to Antoninus Pius, and the great Arch of Trajan which bestrides the Decumanus Maximus at Thamugadi (Timgad).

The most perfect, the most beautiful, the most intricate, the most costly, and therefore the rarest form, is the four-sided arch, like the so-called Temple or Arch of Janus in the Forum Boarium of Rome. Such an arch still stands in Tripoli, and once stood in Cirta (Constantine). The only remaining instance in Africa is the Arch of Septimius Severus at Theveste (Tebessa).

The arch is a perfect square of thirty-six feet. On the keystones of the arches which crown the openings on the four sides are carved medallions : that on the west, a divinity, with an Egyptian head-dress ; that on the east, Minerva. On the frieze are four inscriptions—one to Caracalla ; one to Septimius Severus, who was dead when the arch was erected ; and the third to Julia Domna, *Matri Castrorum et Sen. et Patriæ*, "Mother of the Camp, of the Senate, and of the Fatherland." The fourth face was left blank. This is common, almost universal, in inscriptions to Septimius Severus—either a blank or, as in the case of his arch in the Forum of Rome, an erasure. In every case the cause was the same. It reminds us that in the year A.D. 212, the year after the death of Severus, Caracalla murdered his brother Geta, preferring, as he said, to worship him as a god than to have him as a living rival—"Sit divus dum non sit

vivus.”<sup>1</sup> The blank where the inscription to Geta should have been, fixes the date of the arch. It was erected, or at least dedicated, between the years A.D. 212 and 217. When Solomon came in A.D. 535, he made the arch the principal gateway of his great fortress, and erected an inscription for himself, “the most glorious and most excellent Commander-in-Chief Solomon, Prefect of Libya and Patrician,” in the vacant place.

The most remarkable and beautiful feature of the arch is that it was vaulted, and that on each of the four faces of the arch stood, resting against the central dome, a graceful little shrine, like the *Ædícula* at the entrance of the *Atrium Vestæ* at Rome, doubtless to shelter a statue. The whole is so sumptuous and rich, that it is curious that it has never been copied.

How are we to account for this marvellous profusion of splendid buildings and monuments? How came it that not only great cities, but even small and unimportant towns, were so richly adorned? The answer to these questions is simple and interesting. They were not built out of the rates, or by public subscription; they were, almost without exception, the gifts of private individuals—expressions, that is, of loyalty to the Emperor, and of love and pride in the city itself. Sometimes it was a governor or some great landowner, more frequently it was some wealthy officer in the army, who, either while he was alive, or by will, devoted part of his substance to the expression of his patriotism and to the beautifying of his home.

To these men *Civis Romanus sum* was no un-

<sup>1</sup> The Roman Emperors did not take their apotheoses very seriously. *Væ, puto Deus fio*—“Alas! I am going to be made a god”—were the words of Vespasian when he lay a-dying. It is to the homely wit of the same Emperor that we owe the maxim which is the Great Charter of modern society, “Money does not smell.”

meaning phrase or boast—it was a patent of nobility ; it bound these distant members to the great city which was the heart of the Empire and of the world—sometimes we hear it still, and from strange lips, *Io sono Romano di Roma*. And each colony or town, with its capital and forum, was a little Rome to its inhabitants. From the splendour of the very ruins we learn to realise what Roman patriotism was, and to understand the contempt and hatred with which the Roman officers and citizens regarded the disloyalty, as they deemed it, of those who refused to take the oath of allegiance by burning incense to Cæsar.

But there was more than this. Municipal offices, especially that of perpetual Flamen, or Priest at the Imperial sacrifices, were, in their degree, as much objects of ambition as it was to be consul or tribune then, or M.P. or J.P. now. In England “The County” has yet to learn not to despise “The Town.” To serve on a town council has until recently been considered almost a degradation : a wealthy merchant, when asked why he declined to serve, replied that “he wanted to keep himself respectable.” Things are, happily, improving in this respect, but we are still very far from sharing the intense pride which the Roman citizen felt in his town or municipality. Each office had its fixed price, the *summa honoraria* ; the city did not pay its magistrates—they paid the city for the honour of serving. The result was natural, and the list became a long one. A single fragment of an inscription found in the Curia at Thamugadi (Timgad) gives the names of no less than seventy citizens whom the *Respublica Thamugadensium* had admitted to the *splendidissimus ordo* of *Decuriones*, or town councillors. Rich men were eagerly sought

after for this purpose ; sometimes a man could boast that he was *Flamen Perpetuus* at both Thamugadi and Lambæsis.<sup>1</sup> A freedman, who could not, on that account, be made a Decurion, was elected an honorary member of that august body, and was allowed to wear the robes and regalia and to occupy the reserved seats in the theatres. There was a regular tariff. The price of the Duumvirate—the highest dignity—at Thamugadi was £32, of an Ædileship £24. In certain cases this price was increased *ampliata taxatione*. It was only after this had been paid that bribery began. This usually took the form of a promise to erect some building “to adorn the Fatherland” (*exornare Patriam*).

These benefactions were not always confined to buildings : philanthropy had its place also. A citizen of Sicca Veneria (Kef) left a sum of one million three hundred thousand sesterces (£150,000), for the support and education of five hundred poor children, three hundred boys and two hundred girls, between the ages of three and fifteen years.

But civic duties, however honourable and onerous, could not fill the time of the busy and enthusiastic citizens. Something lighter was needed also.

Happiness comes from God, but men have to make their pleasures for themselves, and apparently it is these unnecessary things which, in the opinion of most, make life worth living.

We have seen the Roman citizen in his home in the country, hunting, boating, fishing, swimming—living, in fact, very much the life of an English country gentleman ; it remains for us now, in dealing with town life, to speak of the public games, which occupied

<sup>1</sup> C.I.L. 2407.

in the life of the people a place even more important than that which they fill nowadays. Thus, in announcing the victory over Firmus, the Emperor Aurelian writes: "Attend the public games, spend your time at the Circus, and leave politics to us. We will undertake all the trouble for you; you shall have all the pleasure."

Some of these amusements were inherited from the Greeks; these were the Circus and the Theatre; the one which the Romans invented for themselves was the Amphitheatre.

### THE CIRCUS

The Circus was merely the Latin form of the Greek hippodrome, and, as its Greek name implies, was originally intended chiefly, if not solely, for chariot racing. In the Homeric poems, Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ulysses were charioteers, not horsemen. It was as a charioteer that Hector won the name by which Homer loves to describe him, "The Chivalrous Hector," and it was to its first great builder, the Etruscan King Tarquinius Superbus, that Rome believed that she owed her first circus, the Circus Maximus. The great difference between the hippodrome and the circus was that, among the Greeks, the drivers in the races were the great men who owned the horses, whereas amongst the Romans, at any rate in the days of the Empire, of which we are now speaking, the charioteers were paid professionals.

From the first days of Roman history, when the legendary Romulus was fabled to have held equally legendary races in the Field of Mars, to the days when riderless horses were raced, in the same place, down the Corso, permission to race Jews having

been withdrawn, *Panem et Circenses*, "Free food and races," have been the chief demands of the Romans. And if it was so in Italy, much more was it the case in Africa, where the love of horses was indigenous;<sup>1</sup> it was from the African grooms that St. Jerome heard the saying which was passed into an English proverb: *Equi dentes inspicere donati*—"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth." This was an interest in which conquerors and conquered, Roman and Berber, were united. Wherever the Romans settled in any numbers they constructed first a theatre, then, if possible, an amphitheatre and a circus. They did so in the east at Carthage, Dougga, El Djem, Leptis Magna, and Sousse; at Constantine, and in the far west at Cherchel. In a mosaic from Gafsa, now in the Bardo at Tunis, we see the *spina* and *metæ*, round which the chariots are racing; by their sides are horsemen, the *jubilatores*, cheering on the teams, while above, in long rows, are the eager faces of the spectators—men and women—for to the circus both were admitted on equal terms, a fact which doubtless added much to the popularity of those games. Ovid has told us how he took a girl to the races, how he shielded her face from the sun with his card of the races, how he admired her ankle and wished he could see more.

Another even more interesting mosaic from Dougga, also in the Bardo, represents a victorious charioteer *Eros*. In his left hand he grasps the reins, in his right the whip and olive crown; over the heads of two of the horses are inscribed, as usual, their names, *Amandus* and *Prunitus*; to the right are the *Carceres*, which took the place of the starting-post; over the charioteer's head runs the pretty, punning compliment:

<sup>1</sup> According to Herodotus, "The Greeks learnt from the Libyans to yoke four horses to a chariot" (iv. 189).

*Eros omnia per te*—"O Love (*Eros*), all things are won by thee."

Another beautiful mosaic, preserved in the Kasbah at Sousse, represents the racing stables of a certain Sorothus. The hopes which Pompeianus centred in his horse Polydorus have been already recorded.

The importance and wealth of a successful charioteer are shown in many ways. Martial compares the beggarly handful of coppers which was all he could earn in a day, with the fifteen bags of gold won by the charioteer Scorpis in a single hour.<sup>1</sup> The largest and costliest house yet excavated at Carthage belonged to another, Scorpionus, while a very curious inscription, discovered at Rome and described by the Contessa Lovatelli, tells us how Crescens, an African by birth, belonging to the faction of the Blues, won his first race in the consulate of Vipstianus Messala, on the anniversary festival of the divine Nerva (A.D. 115), with the horses Circius, Acceptor, Delicatus, and Cotynus, and his last, ten years later, in the consulate of Glabrian, at the festival of the divine Claudius (A.D. 124); and that between these two he won forty-seven first prizes, one hundred and thirty second, and one hundred and eleven third. The prize-money amounted to 1,558,346 sesterces, or £14,340.

The racing world was divided into four parties or *Factiones*—the Green (*Prasini*), the Red (*Russati*), the Blue (*Veneti*), and the White (*Albati*). Four chariots, one of each colour, raced in each heat (*missus*). We find them all in a mosaic in the Thermæ of Diocletian at Rome. The men wear round caps, close-fitting jerkins of their proper colour, tight breeches, and high boots. Round their bodies are laced the thongs which

<sup>1</sup> x. 74.

represented the ends of the reins, and added greatly to the interest of the races by insuring the death of any one who was thrown.

To one or other of these factions every Roman belonged. Nero belonged to the Green, and himself raced in their colours, and lodged the charioteers and grooms in the *Domus Gelotiana* on the Palatine, that he might be able the more easily to enjoy their society. To which of them any one belonged was, for the most part, as much an accident of birth, or station, or surroundings as the politics of an ordinary Englishman, but when once chosen there was no changing; in this, as in other matters, men atoned for the accidental character of their original choice by the obstinacy with which they clung to it. Such a change on the part of a charioteer was so rare that, when it occurred, it was thought worthy of a public monument. In the court of the Church of St. Irene at Constantinople stands a four-sided monument adorned with reliefs and inscriptions. It is dedicated to a certain Porphyrius, a famous charioteer of the beginning of the sixth century. In one of the inscriptions his secession from the Blue faction to the Green is recorded; while in one of the reliefs we are shown Porphyrius himself, in his chariot, with, as usual, the names of the horses over the head of each.

A few years later the change, if made at all, would hardly have been made in this direction. Justinian, who loved horse-racing with an even more passionate devotion than even law or theology, belonged to the Blues (there were then only two factions), while the Empress Theodora was suspected of a sneaking attachment to the Greens and heresy. At any rate the Blues constituted themselves champions of Church and King, and assailed the Greens with a relentless

ferocity which became a matter of political importance. Secure in the protection of the Emperor, masters of the city, almost of the world, they instituted a veritable reign of terror.<sup>1</sup> Clad in cloaks of rat-skins, with long tangled hair and moustaches, recalling by their appearance the ferocious Attila whose savagery they strove to emulate, they wandered in armed bands through the streets plundering, ravishing, or slaughtering whomsoever they would ; their proudest boast was that they could kill a man with a single stroke of the dagger. If a judge were so ill-advised as to attempt to do justice and condemn an offender, the guilty wretch was sure of a free pardon from the Emperor, while the judge was reprimanded, and, if he repeated his offence, his contumacy was punished by removal from his post and banishment to some distant province of the Empire. Meanwhile the unhappy Greens, massacred by their rivals and deserted by the judges, fled from the city and became banditti, preying without mercy on those from whom they had received none.<sup>2</sup>

The interest taken in the races at Carthage is illustrated in a curious way. Elsewhere I shall speak of the funnel tombs in the cemetery of the Roman officials, near the cisterns of La Malga, and of the love and other charms which were dropped into them. With these have been found a number of thin sheets of lead, called *tabulæ execrationis*, on which were scratched in Greek or Latin, sometimes in both, imprecations upon the horses and drivers of various factions. For comprehensiveness and minuteness of detail they are worthy of a place by the side of the

<sup>1</sup> It is said that, on one occasion, thirty thousand were killed in the Circus.

<sup>2</sup> Proc. vii.

famous Rochester Curse, printed by Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*, and parodied by Barham in *The Ingoldsby Legends*. This was the curse which aroused the pity of tender-hearted Uncle Toby:—

“‘I declare,’ quoth my Uncle Toby, ‘my heart would not let me curse the devil himself with so much bitterness.’ ‘He is the father of curses,’ replied Dr. Slop. ‘So am not I,’ replied my uncle. ‘But he is cursed and damned already, to all eternity,’ replied Dr. Slop. ‘I am sorry for it,’ quoth my Uncle Toby.”

Sometimes these imprecations were attached to a *cippus*, or gravestone, by a strip of leather; sometimes they were dropped into the tomb itself. One has been found between two skulls, apparently of men who had been beheaded, as no skeletons were found with them, and they had no relation to the ashes on which they lay. The sheets are naturally small and thin; on one, which measures only three inches by two and a half, the writing is so minute that it can be read only through a magnifying-glass.

The writing runs on a square round the four sides of the sheet, and so round and round until it reaches the centre.

On one, not the most venomous, we find a drawing of the *spina* of the circus; at the top is a rough drawing of a cock’s head; below are the *carceres*. On each side is a list of horses—*Sidereus*, *Igneus*, *Rapidus*, *Impulsator*, and so on—nineteen on one side and eight on the other, which is injured. The imprecation below begins as follows—I give it in the original to show the ignorance of the writer:—

“Ixcito demon qui ic conversans trado tibi os equos ut deteneas illos et inplicentur ec se movere possint.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C.I.L. 12504.

The invocations are varied and interesting ; one begins as follows :—

“ I invoke Thee, whosoever thou art, Spirit of the dead, dead before thy time, by the seven enthroned with the King of the under world, &c.”<sup>1</sup>

Another :—

“ I adjure Thee, O Demon, by the Holy Names, Salbal, Bathbal Authierotabal, Basuthateo, Aleo, Samabethor, bind fast the horses of the Greens, whose names I give Thee,” &c.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes they descend to personalities ; on one the charioteer Dionysius is called, wherever the name occurs, “ the gorging glutton.”<sup>3</sup>

The following may be given at length, not because it is the most detailed or the most savage, but for its curious ending.<sup>4</sup>

The text, which is surrounded with cabalistic figures, runs as follows :—

“ I invoke Thee, by the Great Names, to bind fast every limb and every nerve of Biktorikos (Victoricus), whom Earth, the Mother of every living soul, brought forth, the Charioteer of the Blues, and his horses which he is about to drive, belonging to Secondinas, Ioubenis (Juvenis) and Atbokatos (Advocatus), and Boubalos and Lauriatos, and those of Biktorikos, Pompeianos and Baianos and Biktor (Victor) and Eximios, and those of the Messalians, Dominator, and as many as shall be yoked with them. Bind fast their legs that they may not be able to start or to bound or to run. Blind their eyes that they may not see. Rack their hearts and their souls that they may not breathe. As this cock is bound by its feet and hands and head, so bind fast the legs and hands and head and heart

<sup>1</sup> C.I.L. 12510.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12508.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12508.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12511.

of Biktorikos, Charioteer of the Blues, to-morrow, and his horses which he is about to drive, belonging to Secondinas, Ioubenis and Atbokatos and Boubalos and Lauriatos, and those of Biktorikos, Pompeianos and Baianos and Biktor and Eximios, and those of the Messalians, Dominator, and as many as may be yoked with them.

"Again I adjure Thee by the God of Heaven above Who sitteth upon the Cherubim, Who divided the Earth and severed the Sea, Iao, Abrico, Arbathiao, Sabao, Adonai,<sup>1</sup> to bind fast Biktorikos, Charioteer of the Blues, and the horses which he is about to drive . . . to-morrow in the Circus. Now, Now, Quickly, Quickly."

In size these enormous structures differed greatly ; the Circus Maximus at Rome, after its final enlargement by Trajan, would hold nearly half a million spectators ; that at Carthage would accommodate about half that number ; that of Maxentius, on the Appian Way,<sup>2</sup> about seventeen or eighteen thousand. In plan, however, they were all alike. That at Carthage, which concerns us most, may be taken as a type of them all.

It was a vast enclosure, seven hundred and forty yards long, and three hundred and thirty broad—about the same length, that is, as the Circus Maximus, but only half the breadth. One end was semicircular, the other straight. Round three sides ran the tiers of seats, rising from the ground, like those of an amphitheatre, to a height of three storeys. In the middle of the semicircle was a gate, known as *Libitina*, an euphemism for Death, for it was a sort

<sup>1</sup> These names are in Greek ; the rest is in Latin.

<sup>2</sup> The most perfect existing example.

of "emergency exit" by which those who were killed or injured in turning the goal<sup>1</sup> could be carried out ; for no amusement pleased the Romans which did not at least contemplate such accidents as these.

The other end was the starting-point. It was straight, but, instead of being set at right angles to the sides, inclined to the right, so that all the chariots, whatever their position, might reach the *spina*, round which the course ran, at the same moment. In the middle of this side was the grand entrance, flanked on each side by six stalls, or *carceres*, from which the chariots started. At either end was a tall tower called the *Oppidum*. Down the middle of the course, not parallel with the sides, but at right angles with the *carceres*, ran the *spina*, a barrier three hundred and thirty yards long, splendidly decorated with pillars, statues, altars, and, at Rome, obelisks. At the two ends of the *spina* stood the goals or *metæ*, the turning-points for the chariots ; on these were placed marble dolphins and eggs, seven of each, corresponding in number with the laps of the race, one being removed as each lap was completed ; the dolphins probably represented the sea-horses of Neptune,<sup>2</sup> who was commonly represented in a chariot, while the eggs recalled the legend of Leda and the Swan—Leda, the mother of the great twin-brethren, "Castor, swift with the car," and Pollux, who watered their horses at the Lake of Juturna in the Forum, after the battle of Lake Regillus, and who now stand by the side of their fiery steeds in the Piazza del Quirinale on the Monte Cavallo at Rome.

<sup>1</sup> In the imprecation on Dionysius (C.I.L. 12508), there is a special prayer that he may be thrown out "at the turnings."

<sup>2</sup> Or, more exactly, Consus, the *Neptunus equestris* (Livy, i. 9), whose altar stood on the *spina*.

Of all this splendour nothing remains now save a few heaps of earth and some broken stones. At Dougga the line of the *spina* can still be traced ; elsewhere there is little but a name, and perhaps an inscription, to tell of what once has been.

#### THE AMPHITHEATRE

More dear to the Greeks even than the hippodrome was the stadium for foot-races and other contests, in which the choicest of the Hellenic youth competed. From the games held at Olympia the years were dated, as from the consuls at Rome ; to win the parsley crown of victory was a deed worthy to be immortalised in an ode by Pindar or to be used as a metaphor by St. Paul. But for such harmless sport, save for their own private exercise and amusement, the Romans had little liking. The so-called stadium on the Palatine was probably a garden ; at any rate, it was private, and there is no trace of a stadium, public or private, in North Africa. In place of such we find the purely Roman amphitheatre, more popular even than the circus, if we may judge from the number, size, and magnificence of the buildings. In Africa all that was necessary for the shows was easy to obtain ; elephants, lions, and other wild beasts abounded in the forests and on the mountains, gladiators were not dear, and slaves and Christians were always at hand. Happily the nature of these sports and of the places dedicated to them is so familiar that no detailed description of either is necessary ; especially as, in North Africa, there have as yet been found no important mosaics representing them, like that of the gladiators in the Lateran Museum ; or statues such as that of the Boxer in the Thermæ of Diocletian.

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THEATRE, DOUGGA



AMPHITHEATRE, EL DJEM

In the absence of mosaics, the following may be quoted as interesting. The comic element at the games was supplied by a buffoon, who, dressed as Mercury, went round with a red-hot iron to make sure that the gladiator, or martyr, as the case might be, was really dead. Tertullian, in his *Apology*,<sup>1</sup> refers to this custom, "*Risimus et inter ludicras meritionarum crudelitates Mercurium mortuos cauterio examinantem.*" A representation of this has been found on one of the *tabulæ execrationis* discovered in the Amphitheatre at Carthage. It portrays a monstrous beast, and a man disguised as Mercury; his knee is on a gladiator lying prostrate on the ground, whom he is piercing with a weapon like a chisel or dagger—no doubt the hot iron used to certify the death.

Amongst the largest and by far the most perfect amphitheatre in North Africa is that at El Djem, the ancient Thysdrus, approaching the Colosseum itself in both size and completeness. The first sight of it is strangely impressive. The road from Sousse (Hadrumetum) to Sfax (Taparura) climbs slowly up a long hill; as it reaches the summit, a vast, desolate tract of treeless desert comes in sight. The land is either bare or covered with scrub, save where, here and there, a patch of green tells that it is yielding a scanty return for the ineffectual scratching of an Arab plough. In the distance are a few olives, lately planted by the French, and in the centre of this desolation, closing, at a distance of some six miles, the dreary vista of a long straight stretch of road, there rises out of the wilderness the enormous bulk of the amphitheatre. It is like the lonely Church of Apollinaris, which marks, like a huge gravestone, the place where rests the vanished city of Classis.

<sup>1</sup> xv.

What has become of the mighty city, of the teeming population, which required so prodigious a playground? In the third century of our era, to which the building belongs, Thysdrus, with a population of one hundred thousand, was one of the most important cities of Roman North Africa. It was here that in A.D. 238 the pro-consul Gordian was proclaimed Emperor; according to tradition, the Berber heroine, the Kahenah, made this her fortress in her long fight for liberty against the Arab invaders. Now all is gone. As we passed through the squalid Arab village which nestles under the wing of the rugged walls of the amphitheatre, some navvies who were making a new railroad had just discovered the beautiful mosaic floor of an old Roman house; they offered it to our party if we could remove it. This was, of course, impossible, and it was destroyed. So late as the close of the seventeenth century the amphitheatre was almost intact. Then the natives rebelled, refused to pay taxes, and shutting themselves up, like the Frangipani at Rome, in their fortress, stood a regular siege from the troops of the Bey of Tunis. Victorious in the end, the Bey destroyed a large section of the building to prevent such another happening.

But though now by far the most perfect, the amphitheatre at El Djem was not the only one worthy to be compared with the Colosseum. That at Carthage approached it in size, and was, moreover, five storeys in height instead of three. Fifteen miles south of Tunis, at Oudna (Uthina), was another, hollowed out of the hill. Utica possessed another, larger still, but, like that at Oudna, hollowed out of a hill. Others are found at Henchir Fradiz (Aphrodisium), Ras Dinas (Thapsus), Oued Maliz (Simithu), Bulla

Regia, Sbeitla (Sufetula), Lambessa (Lambæsis), Lamta (Leptis Parva), Thyna (Thœna), Constantine (Cirta), and, in the far west, Cherchel (Cæsarea). Doubtless there were others, but even this number is remarkable when we consider the vast bulk of such buildings, and bears witness to the terrible fascination of the games.

What this fascination was, Augustine tells us in his *Confessions*. A pupil and friend of his, Alypius, had gone to Rome to study law. One day some friends coming home from dinner met him and dragged him, against his will, to the Colosseum. At first he kept his eyes shut. "Would God," says the writer, "he had stopped his ears also! For in the fight, when one fell, a mighty cry of the people striking him strongly, overcome by curiosity, he opened his eyes . . . and fell more miserably than he upon whose fall that mighty noise was raised. . . . For so soon as he saw the blood he therewith drunk down savageness, nor turned away, but fixed his eye, drinking in frenzy unawares, and was delighted with that guilty fight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime. Nor was he now the man he came; but one of the throng he came with. . . . Why say more? He beheld, kindled, shouted, carried with him thence the madness which should goad him to return not only with them who first drew him thither, but also before them, and to draw on others." <sup>1</sup>

Anything more fundamentally contradictory of Christianity can hardly be imagined, than these horrible butcheries "to make a Roman holiday." It may be that too little emphasis has been laid on this antagonism in endeavouring to account for the fierce antipathy of the mob to the followers of Christ. The

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.* vi. 13 (Pusey's translation).

charge of disloyalty, the refusal, as Tertullian says, "to call the Emperor a god, because I cannot lie, and do not choose to mock at him," weighed heavily, doubtless, with the official world, where the Emperor was the embodiment and symbol of law and order and empire; but with the rabble, the majority of whom were not citizens, the condemnation of their darling amusements seemed far more hate-worthy than any refusal to burn incense to Cæsar. It was love of the games far more than love of Cæsar which made the cry, "*Christiani ad leones, Christianæ ad lenones*," so fierce and insistent. This more than anything else made persecution so easy and popular that it seemed natural, even to men like M. Aurelius, the most beautiful soul of the Roman world, to sacrifice Christians at the altars of gods, and on behalf of a doctrine in which he did not himself believe.

For us it is the story of the martyrdom of those who there laid down their lives for Christ, which gives to those monstrous shambles their supreme interest. Sometimes we know nothing save some chance phrase of Tertullian, "that the prisons were crowded with Christians;" sometimes a name has been preserved, and nothing more—Namphano, a slave from Madauros, and another called Miggin. Here and there, however, a document has been discovered whose authenticity will stand the searchlight of modern criticism. It may almost be said that it is on a scene of martyrdom that the curtain first rises on church history in Africa.

In A.D. 177 Marcus Aurelius promulgated two rescripts against the Christians. On July 17th, A.D. 180, some poor peasants who had been arrested as Christians in the village of Scillium, were brought

before the Proconsul, Vigellius Saturninus, at Carthage. They were twelve in number—seven men and five women; but the names of only six are recorded. The whole story shows that the task was distasteful to the judge, and that he tried to get such a retractation from the prisoners as might enable him to dismiss the case. “We,” he says to one of them, “are religious men, like you, and our religion is very simple; we swear by the genius of our Lord the Emperor, and pray for his safety, and you ought to do the same.” Unable to win the submission he required, he offered them thirty days’ grace in which to consider the matter. This they at once refused. At last he was compelled to pass sentence: “Speratus, Nartzalus, Cittinus, Vestia, Donata, Secunda, and the others have confessed that they are Christians. They have been invited to return to the religion of Rome, and they have obstinately refused. Our sentence is that they die by the sword.” “Thanks be to God,” they all exclaimed. “And so,” runs the record, “they together received the crown of martyrdom; and now they reign with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever, Amen.”

It is supposed that the basilica which was raised over their place of burial stood on the little knoll now called Koudiat Tsalli (The Hill of Prayer) near the amphitheatre. Their bones, according to Père Delattre,<sup>1</sup> have recently been discovered in the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo on the Cœlian, in Rome.

After this the Church had rest for twenty years.

In A.D. 202 an edict of the new Emperor, Septimius Severus, gave a fresh impulse to the persecution. We

<sup>1</sup> *Ruines de Carthage*, p. 10.

hear of Jucundus, Artaxius, Saturninus being "burnt alive," of Quintus who died in prison, of Emilius and Castus, a girl Guddenā, and Mavilus of Hadrumetum (Sousse). To this time belongs the martyrdom of Felicitas and Perpetua, who are to-day honoured as the patron saints of Carthage.

Towards the end of the year A.D. 202 five persons were arrested at Thuburbo Minus (Tebourba) and brought to Carthage, on a charge, not of being Christians, but of proselytising. Three were men—Saturninus, Secundulus, and a slave Rebocatus (Revocatus). Two were women—a lady of rank, Vibia (Fabia) Perpetua, and a slave girl Felicitas. It is probable, if not certain, that Perpetua, and perhaps the others, were Montanists. Another, Saturus, followed them to Carthage and gave himself up. The Proconsul, Minucius Timinianus, had just died, and the case came before the *interim* governor, Hilarianus. The *carcer castrensis* where Perpetua was confined is still shown near the modern buildings of St. Monnica. The prisoners were tried and condemned in the Proconsular Palace in Byrsa, and on the day before their martyrdom they were taken to the amphitheatre. There they together shared their last meal, the *Cæna Libera*, to which spectators were admitted. "Look at us well," cried Saturus, turning fiercely on the gaping crowd, "look at us well, that you may be able to recognise us at the Day of Judgment."

The account of their martyrdom is so simple and natural that it may be accepted as true, possibly even as the report of an actual eye-witness.

Before the games they were stripped of their clothes, sacrificial fillets were bound on their heads, and they were given the robes of priests of Hammon, or

priestesses of Tanith. These they refused, so they remained naked. The men were exposed first to the attack of a leopard, then of a bear. For the women, as an insult to their sex, a wild cow was provided. They had both recently had children, and the sight of the milk running down from the breasts of Felicitas touched, for a moment, the hearts of the multitudes. In obedience to the shouts which arose, they were led back and their own clothes were restored to them. Perpetua returned first; she was tossed by the cow and fell upon her back. Her dress was torn, and, as she lay on the ground, she drew it over her limbs again and tried to fasten up her hair, which had come down. She then raised herself, and seeing Felicitas lying, stunned and bruised, she dragged herself towards her and tried to lift her up. The people were again touched with pity, and cried out that their lives should be spared, and they were led out by the gate called *Sanavivaria*. It is a curious touch, as showing the spiritual exaltation of the martyr, that the first words of Perpetua were a question, when the martyrdom would begin. Later in the day the mob changed their minds, and demanded that they should be brought back to suffer. After giving one another the kiss of peace, they awaited the sword in silence. Saturus suffered first: Perpetua last. The executioner was a novice; the first blow failed, and she uttered a cry. Then, seeing that the man was overcome and trembling, she took the dagger in her hand and herself placed it at her throat.

In the arena where they were born again, a cross has been raised to their honour, and a large vault, possibly the one in which they were placed before the martyrdom, dressed as a chapel. Between St. Monnica and La Marsa, a very ancient

*memoria martyrum* has been discovered; it runs as follows :—

..... NT MARTY .....  
 SATURUS SATUR . . .  
 REBOCATUS . . . . .  
 FELICIT . . . PER . . . .

In the Museum at Carthage is a sepulchral slab, said to be that of Perpetua. The inscription runs :—

PERPETUE FILIE  
 DULCISSIMÆ.

If this be true, it would show that she was reconciled to her family, who remained pagan; but the name was not uncommon, and the attribution is more than doubtful.

At Dougga a very interesting memorial has been found of certain martyrs of whom we know neither the names nor the date. Near the roadside on the slope of the hill which is crowned with the Temple of Saturn, are the ruins of a Christian church, built of stones from the temple. Close by, and certainly connected with the church, fragments of an inscription have been discovered, imperfect, indeed, but the meaning of which is clear. It is addressed to "The Holy and most Blessed Martyrs," and speaks of four *cubicula* or crypts which Mammarius, Granus, and Epideforus had built at their own expense for funeral feasts, *symposia* or *convivia*. In Etruscan times these chambers and feasts were common; a very remarkable example of such a chamber is found in the tomb of the Velimni at Perugia. But, in the Christian Church, this seems to be a solitary example.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Convivia* held in honour of martyrs, at their graves, are mentioned by Theodoret (A.D. 429); and Augustine complains of excessive drinking at these feasts. Vide *Egypt and Israel*, p. 133.

The inscription is as follows :—

SANCTI ET BEATISSIMI MARTURES PETIMUS IN MENTE HABEATIS  
UT DONENTUR VOBIS . . . . SIMPOSIUM MAMMARIUM GRANUM EPIDE-  
FORUM QUI HÆC CUBICULA QUATTUOR AD CONVIVIA PRO MARTURIBUS  
SUIS SUMPTIBUS ET SUIS OPERIBUS FECERUNT.

### THE THEATRE

An amphitheatre or circus was a luxury, a theatre was almost a necessity of every self-respecting town. Hollowed, whenever possible, out of the summit or flank of a hill, we find their remains not only in great cities such as Carthage or Sufetula (Sbeitla) or Hadrumetum (Sousse), but in little frontier fortresses like Timgad or Tebessa, and country towns such as Dougga.

For four hundred years the theatre maintained its popularity, but it did so only because it was content to follow rather than to form popular taste ; and popular taste, at any rate among the Romans, fell very low.

In truth, the Romans never took kindly to the Greek drama, whether tragic or comic. The solemnity of the themes chosen, the restrained majesty of the poetry, the elaborate and balanced melody of the choruses, all this required an elevation of mental training and a sensitiveness of ear of which a Roman audience was as incapable as an English one would be to-day ; and so Tragedy became Drama and Drama Melodrama. In the days of the Republic, before cheap and easy divorce had destroyed the sanctity of marriage and of the family life, while “ Matron ” was still

“ Magnum et venerabile nomen,  
Gentibus, et nostræ multum quod profuit urbi,”

dramatists kept their hands off the subject ; but under the Empire, when women counted the years by their

divorces instead of by the Consuls, problem plays, trusting to the violation of the Seventh Commandment for their interest, and extracting such fun as they could out of the wrongs of the deceived and befooled husband, became the rage.

The decay of Comedy was even more rapid and complete ; the fall from Comedy to Farce, from Farce to Burlesque, and from Burlesque to mere buffoonery was unbroken, until at last the legitimate Drama became little better than a variety entertainment. "There," says Apuleius,<sup>1</sup> "the Mimic plays the fool, the Comedian chatters, the Tragedian rants, the Pantomimist (actor in dumb show) gesticulates, the Acrobat risks his neck, and the Conjuror does his tricks." By degrees the old Drama, in which many characters had their balanced parts, was broken up into monologues ; sometimes the choirs occupied the orchestra and accompanied the actor as he declaimed, "through music" ; sometimes the choir played and sang while the actor did his part in dumb-show. Then there was the Mimic who imitated common actions and vulgar people ; or the rough-and-tumble work of the Clown, with the Pantaloon, *stupidus gregis*, who took all the kicks and buffetings ; or the comic business, like the harlequinade of old-fashioned pantomime, between the thief (*Laureolus*) and the policeman. Here there came a touch of tragedy, for since Roman propriety required that the law should triumph in the end, it was necessary that eventually the poor knave should be caught and crucified. Under Domitian this sentence was actually carried out on the stage, to the great content of the audience, who, then as now, loved realism.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, the performance ended with a general *tombola*

<sup>1</sup> *Flor.* 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Afrique Romaine*, p. 259.

or scramble, in which the weaker were thrown down, trampled on, suffocated, and sometimes killed. Fruit, sweetmeats, cakes, money, coins, and medals, with filthy devices, struck for the purpose, were showered upon the rows of seats. At last it was found necessary to give lottery tickets (*tesseræ*) to the respectable folk, and let them leave before the horse-play began.

As last signs of decadence, *encores* were allowed, and a *claque*, *laudiceni*, employed.

To turn from the performances to the buildings is like coming out of darkness into light ; it is difficult to imagine anything more beautiful and gracious than some of the African theatres.

It is sometimes said that whereas the Greeks placed their theatres high up, amid beautiful scenery, as at Taormina, or Syracuse, or Segestus, the Romans were indifferent about the surroundings. Certainly this is true of the two principal theatres of Rome, those of Pompey and Marcellus, as it is of some in Africa, such as those at Bulla Regia, Colonia Julia Assuras (*Zam-four*), or Althiburos (*Medeina*), and always for the same reason that they had to be erected on level ground ; but whenever possible, as at Thamugadi, or Carthage, or Thugga, they were hollowed out of the summit, or at any rate, the flank of a hill, and commanded a view hardly inferior to the famous panoramas from the theatres of Sicily. Since, except in detail, they very closely resemble one another, let us take as an example that at Dougga, as being the most perfect as well as the most beautiful both in structure and in situation.

As is the case with all Latin theatres, and it is one of the points which distinguish them from the Greek, the auditorium, or *cavea*, is a perfect semicircle, the diameter in this case being seventy yards and the radius thirty-five. The *orchestra*, or pit, is surrounded

by five steps, on which were placed seats for magistrates and persons of importance. Access to this part of the theatre, which was separated by a wall from the rest, was given by two arched entrances or *vomitoria*, one on each side. Over that to the right, as you face the audience, was the royal box, or *pulvinar*, which was occupied usually by the man who bore the expense of the spectacle. The rest of the *cavea*, which was hollowed out of the hill, was formed of twenty-five rows of seats. These were divided into three classes, one above the other, by walls and passages; access was given by a grand staircase down the middle and four other staircases which divided the seats into six *cunei* or wedges. Round the top ran a handsome pillared portico or arcade. The portico, which had five doors, one opposite each staircase, bore, as usual, a great inscription. This informs us, with much detail, that Publius Marcius Quadratus, on the occasion of his elevation to the post of Perpetual Flamen of the divine Augustus, by the Emperor Antoninus, presented the entire theatre to his country; that he also gave in it scenic representations, a distribution of food, a feast, and a show of gymnastics.

Let us now turn to the stage.

In front of the stage, or *scena*, beyond the passage between the two *vomitoria*, stood the *pulpitum*; this was a wall about three feet high, in which were a series of seven recesses, alternately square and semicircular; in the middle recess, which was semicircular, stood the altar, which in a Greek theatre would have stood in the centre of the *orchestra*; it reminds us that, even in its worst days, the performance never altogether lost its religious character, and for this reason, men had to attend in full dress, that is, wearing the *toga*. Tertullian created such a scandal at Carthage

by breaking this rule and going in his *pallium* only, that he was obliged to publish an elaborate explanation and apology. In the last recess at each end was a staircase, by which, if necessary, the choir or performers could reach the *orchestra*.

Behind this was the curtain, the *auleum*. As a rule, this was like our drop scene, of a single piece, but it worked on a roller which lay below the stage, so that it was dropped at the beginning, and raised at the end of the performance. On the bottom of it were painted or worked figures of Britons, so that as it rose it seemed as if they were raising it—

“*Purpurea intexti tollunt aulea Britanni.*”<sup>1</sup>

On the stage of the theatre of Timgad there are still sixteen holes for the supports on which the roller rested.

The arrangement at Dougga was somewhat different, in that a series of small curtains took the place of one large one ; but it has been found necessary to rebuild the front of the stage, and the method of working the curtains is not clear.

The stage itself, which is about seventeen feet deep, was covered with mosaic, except in the middle, where there were four trap-doors, for the sudden appearance of gods or ghosts, “‘*Mater te appello dictitantes*,’”<sup>2</sup> and other similar stage business.

All this is not very unlike a modern theatre, and has been imitated with success at Bayreuth. The great difference is in the solid wall which took the place of our movable scenery, at the back of the stage. This was as high as the gallery which ran round the top of the *cavea*, and must have been of two, if not three, storeys, of great splendour and beauty.

<sup>1</sup> Verg., *Æn.* i. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Cic., *Pro Cluentio*.

Across the stage, from side to side, ran a low wall about four feet high, on which rested an arcade of thirty-two pillars. The wall was not straight, but, like the *pulpitum*, followed the line almost universally adopted by the Imperial architects, and was bent into a semicircular apse in the centre, flanked by a square recess on either side. In the centre of each of these was a staircase, rising from the stage in front, and dropping to the green room, or part reserved for the actors, behind. By the side of each of these flights of steps were four pillars, rising to the height of the others, but resting on the stage. The arcade of pillars undoubtedly carried a cornice; how these large pillars were crowned is uncertain: perhaps they carried statues. The upper storey or storeys of the *scena* have perished.

Such is the theatre of Dougga; but the whole place is so interesting, and is so good an example of a prosperous Roman country town, as to deserve a somewhat more detailed notice than can be given by a description of the separate buildings.

## CHAPTER IX

### A COUNTRY TOWN

THE journey from Tunis to Dougga is rather wearisome. For the first forty miles the train takes us along the banks of the Medjerba to Medjez-el-Bab, the Roman Membressa. It was on the plain, south-east of Membressa, that in A.D. 536, Belisarius defeated the mutineers under his former lieutenant Stotzas. Of the gateway which gave the place its modern name, "The Gate of the Ford," nothing remains. In fact, with the exception of a few capitals, and the stones of which the modern bridge has been constructed, nothing remains of the old Roman settlement. The Arab village was founded in the fifteenth century by the Moors who had been driven from Andalusia. The rest of the journey, lasting six to seven hours, has to be made in a covered cart, called by courtesy a diligence.

The road runs along the lower slopes of the Djebel Djebs, between which and the Djebel Krab the Medjerba flows, through Slouguia (Chiddibia) to Testour (Tichilla). Both these villages were also founded by the Moors from Spain. The open spaces, the wide straight streets, the tiled houses with pent-houses in front—above all, the white complexion of the Andalusians, as the inhabitants are called, give the villages a strangely European appearance.

Another five miles and we reach Aïn Tounga, which once bore the sonorous name of *Municipium Septimium Aurelium Antoninianum Herculeum frugiferum Thig-*

*nicæ*. The ruins are very extensive and interesting; they include temples to Mercury, Saturn, Cœlestis, and an unknown deity; the remains of cisterns, a triumphal arch, a church, and a huge Byzantine fortress.

Leaving the Siliana, which we have followed for some miles, we follow the Oued Khalled through Sustri (Civitas Sustritana) and Ain Golea to Teboursouk (Thubursicum Bure). Here we stay for the night.

Teboursouk was at one time a town of some importance, but little of the old Roman colony remains, except two triumphal arches, which have been built up in the walls of the vast and very interesting Byzantine fortress, and part of the old city wall. It is built high up against the rocky hill of Sidi Rahma. A deep ravine protects it in front.

From Teboursouk a drive of about six miles brings us to Dougga. The road climbs higher and higher along the flank of a great amphitheatre of hills, the Kef Teboursouk and the Kef Dougga, to a lofty cape, pushing out into the plain, on the farther slope of which the ruined city lies. Climbing up the precipitous side of the hill to the plateau which crowns it, we find ourselves among the scattered dolmens of some forgotten race. They much resemble those at Roknia,<sup>1</sup> but are less numerous, less perfect, and therefore less interesting. Beyond them lies the *spina* of the circus. It was two hundred yards long, but, except the *metæ* at the ends, little now remains. To the left of it lay a temple; then a group of cisterns fed by a little aqueduct, and then the great Byzantine enceinte which ran from the edge of the precipice to the capitol, which crowned the other slope of the hill.

Scrambling over the Byzantine wall, we find our-

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Part II., Chapter I.

selves in the Temple of Saturn,<sup>1</sup> and at our feet, low down by the side of the road, lies an interesting Christian basilica, built with the stones of the old temple. It must have been a pretty little building of the usual type, a nave with aisles and arcades of pillars, and a semicircular apse at the east end; two flights of steps led up to the *presbyterium*, and two others down to the very perfect crypt below. Several sarcophagi have been found *in situ*; on one we can still read the name:

VICTORIA SANTIMONIALE IN PACE.

Two annexes lie to the north and to the south. Close by was found the inscription to the "Holy and Happy Martyrs," printed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

A few steps from the Temple of Saturn bring us to the great central entrance to the arcade, which encircled the topmost row of seats in the theatre. We pass on; and pause for a moment to look at one of the most beautiful scenes that North Africa has to show.

The morning had been wet, and, though the sun had broken through and was shining brightly, heavy masses of cloud still floated across the sky and threw dark patches of purple shadow over hill and valley before us. To the left stretched the long fertile valley of the Oued Khalled, through which ran the road<sup>3</sup> from Carthage, through Sicca Veneria (Kef) to Theveste (Tebessa). It was along this road that Matho and Spendius led the mutinous mercenaries, and it was here that they found the multitude of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* p. 147.

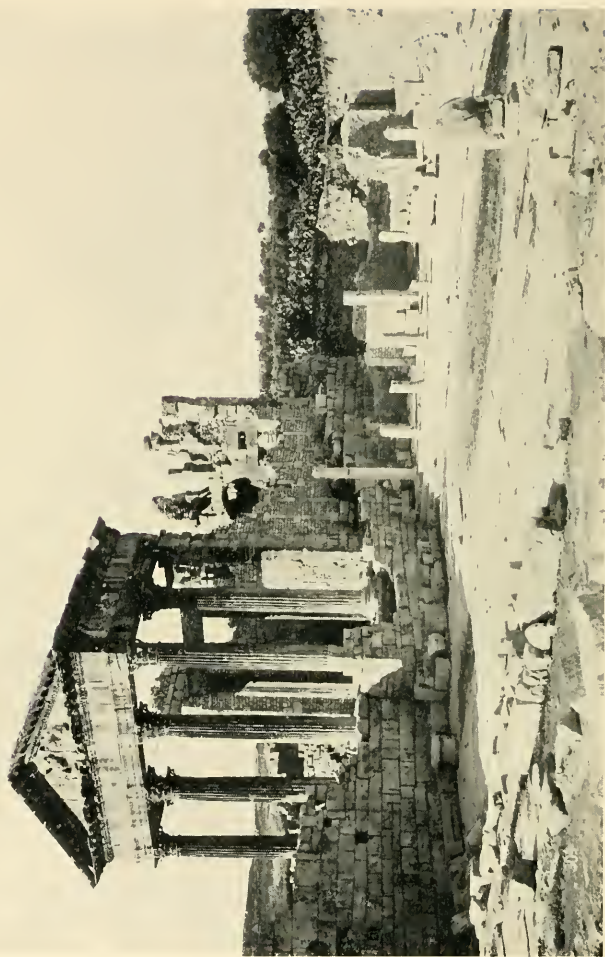
<sup>3</sup> An inscription at Theveste tells us that this road was made by the Third Legion, when Publius Mitilius Secundus was Proprætor, and that it ran from Theveste to Carthage, a distance of two hundred and eleven miles, seven hundred and forty paces.

crosses bearing crucified lions. Somewhere near lay Zama. Under Roman cultivation it must have been a tract of immense fertility, as indeed is shown by the incredible number of Roman towns, villas, and stations which lay in all directions. Even now the fields of wheat and barley, the vineyards, and above all the great olive gardens, show that its richness is returning. On the other side the wide open valley is shut in by the heights of the Djebel Abdullah Cherid. Higher still, in the far blue distance, start up the wild crags of Zaghouan.

Close in front, and to our right, lay the wonderful ruins of the wealthy Roman town, *Colonia Licinia Septimia Aurelia Alexandrina Thugga*. It took its name from the Libyan village of "Tucca," "The Pastures."

Immediately below us, just outside the theatre, lay the squalid little Arab village of Dougga, which unfortunately occupies much of the site of the old town. In a sheltered spot close by, an Arab sheik, in gorgeous apparel, was exercising his horse, in readiness for the Fantasia which was to be held at Tunis on the following Sunday, in the presence of the Bey and of the French authorities. The horse was richly caparisoned. The head-piece, blinkers, and reins, and the high saddle, rising almost to the shoulders of the rider, were of red leather, worked in gold. The feet rested in broad, square stirrups, the sharp corners of which acted as spurs. But in addition to these, the rider wore murderous-looking prick-spurs, nearly a foot long, with which he could stab his unfortunate horse in the very tenderest places, and make it prance and rear, not from spirit, but from sheer agony. In a corner against a wall squatted a musician, to the sound of whose pipes





PLACE OF THE ROSE OF THE WINDS, DOUGGA

the horseman was trying to make his horse keep time. All round stood or crouched a group of natives, watching his evolutions with the languid curiosity which is all they ever vouchsafe to show.

To the right of the theatre lies the Forum, consisting, not of a single court as at Timgad, but of a series of small spaces, esplanades, and staircases, in the centre of which stands the Capitol.<sup>1</sup> We follow an old road, only partly excavated. To our left as we enter the Forum is a little semicircular shrine dedicated to Pietas Augusta. Close by are the foundations, now overgrown with shrubs, of a rectangular building, probably a Temple of Fortune, according to an inscription found close by: "FORTUNAE. AVG VENERI CONCORDIÆ MERCVRIO."

Thus we reach the upper court of the Forum, called the Place of the Rose of the Winds. In front rises the wonderful Capitol: to the right lies the Temple of Mercury. The sanctuary consisted of three cells, preceded by a portico of ten pillars carrying a long inscription, telling us how Quintus Pacuvius Satorius, his wife Nahania Victoria, and their son Felix Victorianus built this Temple to Mercury. Another text shows that it was built between the years A.D. 160-220.

On the pavement of the Forum, in front of the temple, is cut a curious chart or compass of the winds, from which the place takes its name. It is a large circle, divided into twenty-four segments. In every other one of these is carved the name of the wind which blew from that quarter. Here are the names: SEPTENTRIO (N.). AQVIL. EVROAQVIL. VVLTVRNVS (E.). EVRV. LEVCONOTVS. AVSTER (S.). LIBONOTVS. AFRICVS. FAVONIVS (W.). ARGESTES. CIRCIVS.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 101.

Beyond the Forum stands high against the sky the beautiful portico of the Capitol. Then past the Arch of Severus, known as the Roman Gate, Bab er Roumia, and beyond another cluster of cisterns fed by an aqueduct, fed with the waters of the Ain-el-Hamman, we catch a glimpse through its sheltering olives of the lovely Temple of Cœlestis.<sup>1</sup>

A little below the Forum rises the striking gateway of the Dar-el-Acheb, or House of Ahab, as it is called from the name of its owner. Its former purpose is unknown.

Immediately in front of us, the ground drops so abruptly that it reaches to the second storey at the back, of houses which open on the roadway in front. The beautiful mosaic floors of many of these remain *in situ*. Others are at Tunis. Amongst these is that of the charioteer "Eros"<sup>2</sup> and a very large one of three colossal Cyclopes working in the cavern-forge of Vulcan. The mosaic is much injured, but the Cyclopes are almost perfect. They are wielding sledge-hammers. The hammer of one has just struck the anvil. The second holds his high over his head poised in the very act of bringing it down. The third is leaning backwards with his hammer thrown behind him, gathering his full strength for the stroke. The rhythmical swing of the three hammers is admirable; while, for the freedom and vigour of its figure-drawing, this wonderful mosaic deserves to rank with a fresco of Michael Angelo.

Perhaps the most beautiful of these houses is that which is called, from the shape of one of its rooms, "The Trefoil." The house consists of a court planted with trees and shrubs, and surrounded by a portico formed of columns covered with stucco, on which

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* p. 130.

rested a wooden ceiling. The floor is covered with a rich pavement of mosaics, representing two masques, tragic and comic, a pigeon, and leafy vine branches encircling a horse. The house is approached from behind by a beautiful staircase with landings enriched with mosaics.

To our right as we descend the hill lie the great public thermæ, supplied with water by cisterns which are themselves fed by an aqueduct. To our left are the imposing ruins of another arch to Septimius Severus.

Passing on, through an olive garden in which are the remains of some huge dolmen tombs, formed of dressed stones, and of a much later date than those near the Temple of Saturn, we see the imposing mass of the great Libico-Punic mausoleum of Ataban, about which so much has been said.<sup>1</sup> Surrounded by olives of immemorial age, it looks out calmly over the green valley and on the great road, first made when itself was old, along which so many civilisations have stormed and passed away, leaving the old Berber stock almost where and as they found it.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 12, and Part II., Chapter III.

## CHAPTER X

LACHRYMÆ ECCLESIAE, A.D. 150-423

THE beginnings of Christianity in North Africa are lost beyond the reach, not merely of history, but even of tradition or legend. We know nothing of the little group of Christians—slaves, sailors, merchants, or soldiers—who no doubt formed here, as they did at Rome, the first nucleus of a Christian community; nothing of the apostolic man or bishop, who, like St. Paul at Rome, built up the congregation into a Church. All we can say is that, when light first breaks in, late in the second century, we find a vigorous and active Church, widely spread and fully organised, with bishops in all the important towns. Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, summoned<sup>1</sup> a synod of seventy. In general character it resembled the Eastern churches, such as those of Asia Minor, more than the Church of Rome, especially in the position assigned to the bishops, which was, at any rate after the time of Cyprian, essentially autocratic and monarchic, rather than constitutional, as it has always been at Rome; no body of priests, for instance, ever claimed or gained the position occupied at the Imperial city by the College of Cardinals. It treated with Rome as a sister Church; sometimes submitting to it its difficulties for solution, sometimes itself called in to give its decision in some difficult case. Thus in the time of Cyprian, A.D. 251, the claims of the rival Popes, Novatianus and Cornelius, were referred to him for adjudication.

<sup>1</sup> *Circ.* A.D. 215.

The Church was Eastern, too, in its fiery turbulence and restless activity, but with the great difference that the questions which divided it were not intellectual, but disciplinary. It produced no great heresiarch, but was torn asunder and finally destroyed by the schismatic Donatus. The questions which disturbed and distracted it did not concern the doctrine of the Trinity or of the Divinity of Our Lord, but the validity of baptism administered by heretics, and, above all, the treatment to be dealt out to those who, in time of persecution, had fallen away.

The history of the Church gathers round three or four outstanding men—the fiery apologist, Tertullian; the great Bishop, Cyprian; the schismatic, Donatus; the learned theologian, Augustine. It will give coherence as well as colour and interest to what follows, to make it centre, so far as possible, in these names.

Tertullian was born at Carthage about the year A.D. 150,<sup>1</sup> and died there about sixty years later; that is all we know. His parents were heathen; his father was a Proconsular centurion; he himself was brought up to be a lawyer. He was converted to Christianity in the year A.D. 192, and ordained deacon and priest; in A.D. 199 he joined the schism of Montanus,<sup>2</sup> driven to it, he says, by the envy and contumeliousness of the clergy. Such, in bare outline, was his life. Its importance lies in the period it covered, and in the writings which his surroundings called forth.

The Golden Age of the Empire died with Marcus

<sup>1</sup> That is, about twenty years before the first persecution, in which the martyrs from Scillium sealed their faith with their blood. We read of no martyrs between those of Scillium and Thuburbo, A.D. 180–198.

<sup>2</sup> Shortly before the death of the Montanist martyrs from Thuburbo. *Vide* p. 144.

Aurelius in A.D. 180. The Age of Iron began with his son Commodus, the Gladiator. Still, both he and his successors, Pertinax and Didius Julianus, in spite of the efforts made by the priestesses of Cœlestis to influence Pertinax, were friendly, or at least neutral, towards Christianity. With Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211) began the military despotism, and with it a time of persecution.

Severus was a Berber, born at Leptis, and raised to the purple by his army. Not unnaturally, he relied upon the army which had placed him on the throne. "Enrich the soldiers," he said; "never mind the others." His interest in North Africa, and her pride in him, are writ large on the face of the country, in the many triumphal arches erected in his honour, at Tebessa, Lambessa, the two great camps on the slopes of the Aures, at Haïdra (Ammædara), Dougga, and elsewhere. During the civil war which occupied the first years of his reign, he was busy about other things, and the Church in Italy had peace; but in Africa there were intervals of sharp and cruel persecution. At last, with peace to the Empire, came times of trouble to the Church; in A.D. 198, when Vigellius Saturninus was Proconsul, the sword was definitely unsheathed.

The apology, or defence of Christianity, which this called forth, is the best known and most famous of all the writings of Tertullian, and this not merely because of its impassioned eloquence and vigour and dialectical skill. More remarkable than any of these is the tone adopted and the absence of any "apology" in the modern sense of the word. There is no plea for mercy, but a demand for justice; no cry for pardon for hidden crime or disloyalty, but a claim for praise and honour for conspicuous virtue. Christians are the best

citizens,<sup>1</sup> the truest patriots ; to fight against them is useless ; to destroy them is impossible ; they multiply under persecution, and, in his own great words, " the blood of Christians is the seed " of the Church.<sup>2</sup> With fierce eloquence he defends God Himself for permitting persecution and martyrdom. It is not death—it is salvation ; God is killing death by death, and is justified in doing so. " What you call perversity, I call reason ; what you call cruelty, I call kindness." "*Perversitas quam putas Ratio est, quod sævitiam æstimas Gratia est.*"

It is in such paradoxes as these that he delights ; we find them on every page : " Lie to be true," " God is great when little ;" or, to take the most celebrated of them all, " The Son of God died ; it is credible because it is foolishness ; buried, He rose again ; it is certain because it is impossible." "*Mortuus est Dei Filius, prorsus credible est quia ineptum est ; Et sepultus resurrexit, certum est quia impossibile est.*"<sup>3</sup> Well may Pusey say of him, " His writings were thunderbolts, the fire which kindles and the beacon which warns ;" or, in his own words, " O wretched man that I am, always consumed with the fever of impatience." "*Miserrimus ego, semper æger caloribus impatientiæ.*" It is easy to understand why he set so deep a stamp upon the character of the African Church, and how it was that men like Cyprian and Augustine fell so completely under his sway.

A very *Malleus Hæreticorum*, his pen was always

<sup>1</sup> " We are made brothers," he declares, " by those very questions of money which with you set brother against brother. We are of one heart and soul ; that is why we are so ready to share our goods one with another. We have everything in common, except our women." (*Apol.* 39.)

<sup>2</sup> "*Plures efficitur quoties metimur a vobis ; semen est sanguis Christianorum.*" (*Apol.* 50.) The ed. 1641 quotes St. Jerome : "*Est sanguis martyrum seminarium Ecclesiarum.*"

<sup>3</sup> *De Carne Christi.*

at the service of the Church, even after his own lapse into the schism of Montanus.

Whatever his subject, he was always vehement, always in extremes, often powerful. Sometimes he descended to personalities. In his answer to a painter, Hermogenes, who had ventured to write a pamphlet in defence of Gnosticism, "If your pictures," he says, "are like your book, you are the sorriest painter that ever lived."

Later on the Church itself came in for its share of castigation. How far the assault was deserved, or what deduction we must make for a constitutional tendency to exaggeration, it is difficult to say. A few quotations may be given: they have not altogether lost their point even now.

Women on the way they do their hair: "Some of you dye your hair with saffron. I suppose you are ashamed of your race, and want to be mistaken for Germans or Gauls, and change your hair in consequence. It is bad to think a thing beautiful when it is only dirty . . . if you do not blush for the size of your headgear, blush for its filth. Do not take the spoils of another head, perhaps filthy, perhaps guilty and destined for hell, to deck the sacred head of a Christian woman."<sup>1</sup>

Christians who escape persecution by flight or payment: "I do not know whether to weep or blush when I see on the police lists, among publicans, pick-pockets, thieves, gamblers, and pimps, the fines paid by Christians. I suppose that the Apostles organised the episcopate provisionally, in order that the bishops might enjoy the revenues of their sees in safety, under pretence of ruling them." As to the poor laity: "Their guides themselves—deacons, priests, and bishops—are

<sup>1</sup> *De Cultu*, ii. 5-7.

in full flight; now the people know what is meant by 'flee from one city to another.' When the officers desert, who among the crowd of soldiers will dare advise others to keep their ranks?" As to these officers: "Doubtless they are packing their boxes, to be ready to fly 'from city to city'; that is the only text they remember well; . . . their pastors! I know them; lions in peace, stags in war."<sup>1</sup>

He deals with equal faithfulness with the Pope. "Whence did you receive the rights you usurp for your Church? Do you pretend to believe that you have inherited the power of binding and loosing—that is to say, you and the Church which traces up to Peter? Who are you who destroy and alter the manifest intention of our Lord, who gave this power to Peter personally! How does all this apply to the Church, at any rate to yours, O man of the flesh?"<sup>2</sup>

To attend the games was to go "*de cælo in cœnum*," "from the sky to the sty."

For the benefit of theatre-goers, he relates how a woman once came home from the theatre possessed of a devil; and how the evil spirit, when cast out, complained bitterly, protesting that he had every right to her, as he had found her trespassing on his domain. "*In meo eam inveni*."<sup>3</sup>

Under Hilarion, A.D. 202–203, persecution broke out again. The occasion seems to have been the refusal of a Christian soldier to accept the laurel crown (*donativum*) presented by Severus and Caracalla;<sup>4</sup> but it took a new form—the refusal to Christian dead of their own proper place of burial: "*Aræ non sint*," "No cemeteries." Severus had given leave to all classes to form burial clubs, and the Christians took

<sup>1</sup> *De Fuga*, 11–13.

<sup>3</sup> *De Spect.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Pudic.*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> *De Corona*.

advantage of this permission to register themselves as an association of this kind, and so bring themselves and their places of meeting under the protection of the law, and become possessed of a cemetery of their own. As a matter of fact, the Christians were using the law for a purpose for which it was never intended ; but it was equally true that their persecutors stretched the law also ; for the edict of Severus did not condemn a man for being a Jew or a Christian, but only for becoming one—it was intended to prevent proselytising.<sup>1</sup> “*Judæos fieri*” (not *esse*) “*sub gravi pœnâ vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit.*” Under laws so ill-defined it is clear that the position of the Christians depended largely upon the character and disposition of the Governor. Under Saturninus and Hilarion there was persecution. “How often,” says Tertullian, “has an angry crowd, on its own initiative, stoned or burnt us. Nay, they will not spare even our dead ; they drag the corpses from the grave where they rest ; already past recognition, already corrupted, they carry them away and tear them in pieces.”<sup>2</sup> Under Julius Aspar there was peace for some five or six years ; on the death of Severus, trouble broke out again.

Considering the dangerous days in which Tertullian lived, his uncompromising partisanship, and the ferocious invective of which he was a master and which he used so freely, it is amazing that he never seems to have suffered from persecution himself. Yet so it was, and the fact cannot but give us pause as we try to form an opinion concerning the real character and stringency of the persecutions themselves. Everything by turns, and nothing long, always in extremes in his

<sup>1</sup> Proselytising was the charge brought against Perpetua and the other martyrs of Thuburbo.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.* 39.

opinions, and always eager to express them, Tertullian had been a heathen for some thirty years, and then for nine years a Churchman, then a Montanist, and last of all, when this was not austere enough to satisfy him, a "Tertullianist" pure and simple. Yet he lived unharmed, and at last died quietly in his bed, we know not how, or when, or where.

Some five or six years after his death, about the year A.D. 220, was born a disciple who was to prove greater than his master, Thascius Cyprianus. He was a man of rank, position, and wealth. His home was at La Marsa, the pleasant valley which leads down to the sea between the Beacon Hill of Cape Carthage and the heights of Djebel Khaoui and Kamart. Then, as now, it was the pleasantest and most fashionable suburb of Carthage. Large-minded, generous in money matters, eloquent, able, popular, and ambitious, he lived for five and twenty years the ordinary life of a Roman gentleman. Then in the year A.D. 245 he was converted to Christianity by an old priest, Cæcilianus, and baptized by the name of Cæcilius, after the man to whom he owed his conversion. He at once sold his estates and villa at La Marsa and gave the money to the poor. His friends bought in the villa, but he was with difficulty restrained from selling it again. It was to this villa that he was confined just before his martyrdom. Four years later, in A.D. 249, the unanimous voice of the people, never more truly than on that day the voice of God, called him, sorely against his will, to the difficult, dangerous, and thankless post of Archbishop of Carthage and Pope of the African Church.

These years had been a period of more than ordinary unrest in the Roman Empire, and of a revolution of which Africa had been the principal scene. Driven

to that revolt which is so often the daughter of despair, by the monstrous extortions and cruelties of Maximin, who had seized the throne on the murder of Alexander Severus, the young nobles of Thysdrus forced upon the Proconsul Gordianus and his son the dangerous glory of the purple. At Rome the appointment was received with acclamation, for the Gordiani were men of high rank, enormous wealth, and real nobility of character. It would have been well for them if they had been men of action as well, but this, unfortunately, they were not. While they were awaiting at Carthage the ratification of their election by the Senate, Capellianus, the Legate of Numidia and commander of the army, advanced against them at the head of the Third Legion, defeated and killed the younger Gordianus, and took and sacked the city. The elder Gordianus committed suicide, after a reign of thirty-six days.

On the accession of Gordianus III., the grandson of the elder and nephew of the younger Gordianus, after the murder of Maximin in A.D. 238, Capellianus was arrested, and, no doubt, executed, and the famous Legion disbanded; the soldiers were sent to serve in other legions in Rhœtia, and their place in Africa was taken by detachments of the Rhone Legion, which was stationed in Mauretania. This, however, did not last for very long. The men served their new general, Valerian, so faithfully, that when, in A.D. 253, he marched on Italy and possessed himself of the throne, he rewarded their fidelity by reconstituting the Legion and sending it back to its old quarters in Africa.

For the Church these years of fierce civil strife had been a time of peace, of expansion, of organisation, and generally of growth and prosperity. But with

these had come, perhaps inevitably, a widespread relaxation of discipline; and the disorders and scandals within the Church, which had driven Tertullian into schism, had grown rank and monstrous. Cyprian himself has described what he found and had to deal with in words which might have been written by Tertullian: "Amongst the laity, unsatiable cupidity and love of money; no piety amongst the priests; no faith amongst the ministers; no compassion in almsgiving; no discipline in morals; rash oaths followed by frequent perjury; contempt for the clergy; poisonous scandals; divisions and bitter hatred. Bishops desert their sees to make money in trade, appropriate church funds, and practise usury. This is what we see."<sup>1</sup> And on a Church so ill-prepared to face it, the storm of persecution broke.

In A.D. 249 Decius became Emperor, and in the following year he promulgated an edict requiring all Christians formally to recant within a certain time. Many stood firm; the names or office of some of these are known; a young reader endured torture and exile; a priest, Numidicus, Paulus, Mappalicus, Celerinus, and others sealed their faith with their blood; but the falling away was general. Day after day, Byrsa was besieged by crowds of Christians thronging to make their submission before the time of grace expired.

Cyprian fled and remained in hiding for sixteen months, until the worst was over. Doubtless he was right—his life was of more value to the Church than his death.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless also, to a man of his proud nature and dauntless courage, to live under the stigma of cowardice was far harder than to face the danger, and, if necessary, to die. During his absence, a

<sup>1</sup> *De Lapsis*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. xviii. 3.

violent opposition to his return sprang up under a certain Felicissimus; and although the joy with which he was welcomed back, the prompt excommunication of those who had turned against him, and his own unimpaired authority showed that, in his case, the Church at large approved of the course which he had adopted, the question was not settled, but was destined to arise again and to form one of the chief causes of the schism of Donatus. A terrible pestilence which broke out soon after, in which he showed himself a very Carlo Borromeo in his generosity, courage, and loving care of the sufferers, whether Christian or not, made his position unassailable.

In a letter written at that terrible time, he exhorts his flock to courage, faith, and resignation, and bids them not to weep too sorely over those who die: "We have not lost them; they have only gone before. Like travellers we may regret their departure, but not lament over them. Put on no mourning here for those who, on high, are clothed in white. There, on high, await us our parents, our brothers, our children, who in serried ranks lament our absence; sure of their own salvation, they are only anxious about ours. What joy for them to see us again and embrace us! There you will see the glorious company (*chorus*) of the Apostles, the army of prophets, the innumerable throngs of crowned martyrs, virgins who have overcome the temptations of the flesh and of the body, the charitable who have exchanged the good things of this world for the treasures of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

The next few years were spent in vigorous reforms of the Church throughout all Africa. In contradiction to the more moderate, and wiser, views of the Church of Rome, baptism administered by heretics was held

<sup>1</sup> *De Mart.*

to be invalid ; the authority of the bishops was everywhere strengthened, and discipline enforced, though a more tolerant and generous indulgence was granted to penitent renegades. Throughout the world Cyprian was recognised as the greatest Churchman of his day. Reference has already been made to the appeal to his decision made by the Church of Rome ; in like manner the Church of Spain invoked his authority against an endeavour of the same Church of Rome to reinstate two bishops who had been deposed ; while from Gaul and from the East men turned to him for guidance. Truly on him, more than on any man, came the care of all the Churches.

Then came the end. The legions in Gaul had made Valerian Emperor (A.D. 253), a man whom all thought worthy of reigning until he reigned—" *vir omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset* " <sup>1</sup>—as Tacitus says of Galba. In August A.D. 257, he issued a first edict of persecution, closing the cemeteries, forbidding all assemblages of Christians, and ordering all to join in the official worship. On August 30 the Proconsul, Paternus, summoned Cyprian before him, and on his refusal to conform, banished him to Curubis (Kourba) across the Gulf, on the east coast of Cape Bon. There he remained for nearly a year. It was at Curubis in the autumn of that year that he composed his last treatise, an exhortation to martyrdom.

Meanwhile the persecution waxed fiercer. Bishops and clergy, men, women, and children, were condemned to labour in the mines at Sigus, near Cirta. Unable to visit them, Cyprian sent them what help he could by the hand of a sub-deacon, Herranianus, and three acolytes, Lucanus, Maximus, and Amantius ; they

<sup>1</sup> *Hist.* i. 49.

returned, bringing with them a touching letter of gratitude (Ep. 78), which has been preserved.

In July of the following year, A.D. 258, from the far east where he was fighting, Valerian issued another edict more terrible still, aimed directly at the heads of the Church. To this persecution belong the massacres at Utica, known as the *Massa Candida*, the martyrdom of Theogones, Bishop of Hippo, of Jacobus and Marianus at Cirta, of Lucius, Montanus, Julianus, Victorinus, Flavianus, and others at Carthage.<sup>1</sup>

At last the Proconsul, Galerius Flavianus, was compelled to take action against Cyprian himself. He had already recalled him from Curubis and confined him to his villa at La Marsa, in the earnest hope, we cannot help thinking, that he would seize the opportunity thus offered him and escape. This time, however, the path of duty was clear, and Cyprian refused to fly. "A bishop," he said, "must confess his Lord among his flock." On September 13 he was brought to the Villa of Sextus (*ad Sexti*) at La Marsa, near the site of the present British Consulate, to which the Proconsul had retired on account of illness. Flavianus was, however, too unwell to conduct the trial on that day, and he was remanded. He passed the night with his friends in the quarters of the chief officer who had charge of him, in or near the Proconsular Palace on Byrsa. In the morning he walked back to the *Ager Sexti*, a distance of about two miles, and was taken to a large hall, called the *Atrium Sauciolum*, where the trial took place. The officer in charge, seeing that his robes were wet with perspiration, offered him others. "Never mind," replied the Bishop, "all will be set right to-day."

<sup>1</sup> An inscription (C.I.L. 7924) found on a rock at the entrance of the gorge of the Rummel at Constantine, gives the names of twelve who were martyred there in A.D. 259.

The Proconsul was surrounded by his guard of the famous Third Legion. The trial was short and dignified, worthy of two men who respected and, perhaps, knew and liked one another.

"Are you Thascius Cyprianus?"—"I am."

"Pope of these impious men?"—"I am."

"The holy Emperors order you to sacrifice."—"I will not sacrifice."

"Be on your guard." (*"Consule tibi."*)—"Do what you are commanded to do. In so clear a case there is no room for hesitation."

The Proconsul then pronounced sentence of death. Cyprian replied, "Thanks be to God."

He was led out to a spot not far from the house, evidently frequently used for executions, for the people knew the spot and had assembled in multitudes to see the death of the friend and benefactor of all, the foremost citizen of Carthage. Arrived at the place, he held the handkerchief to his eyes, and as it was being tied, he bade his friends, in his lordly way, give twenty-five pieces of gold (£15) to the executioner. Utterly overcome, perhaps by the vast concourse of people, perhaps by the generosity and dignity of the great man he was called upon to kill, the soldier was unable to hold the sword; the centurion took it from his trembling hand and struck the blow.<sup>1</sup>

So died Cyprian. He was thirty-eight years old; he had been a Christian for fourteen years, and a bishop for nine.

All day his body lay where he had died. In the evening the Christians were allowed to remove it, and with great pomp and many torches bore it to the cemetery of Macrobius Candidianus (*"ad areas Macrobiani"*),

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Benson, in his *Life of Cyprian*, was the first to notice this incident.

near the huge cisterns of Malga (*juxta piscinas*), where it was buried. The exact spot is unknown, but a cross has been erected on the little mound known as the Koudiat Sousou, near the cisterns, in memory of the greatest of all North African Churchmen.

Nothing can justify persecution but success. It must be pressed home, relentlessly and pitilessly, until its object is attained in the destruction of the persecuted cause, or it is worse than a failure. Even this justification, poor as it is, the Roman persecution of the Church lacked. It was intermittent, often half-hearted; and, though the sufferings of the Christians were occasionally very terrible, the only possible object of the persecutor, the stamping out of the faith, was never even approached. The solvent which finally ruined the glorious Church of Africa came not from without, but from within. It was caused, not by any assault of the heathen, not even by any heresy against the faith, but merely by schism, a sin against the unity and discipline of the Church. A story is told of a Free Kirk missionary who, when asked what doctrine of Christianity he found it hardest to explain to his converts, replied that he could not make them see the necessity for the Disruption; and it is difficult indeed for us, amongst whom division has ceased to be considered a sin or even an evil to be avoided, to understand the fury of the passions aroused by the terrible internecine struggle between the Church and the Donatists, or the savagery with which it was fought out. Yet this war ended in the ruin of Christianity, and contributed more than anything to destroy the Roman Empire in Africa. The African Church, like that of Rome, was not noted for intellectual subtlety; and its stability was never shaken by any great dispute

about the foundations of the faith; but, unlike Rome, its machinery had not the sanctions of the old Empire. The old Imperial titles and habits of government, and the corresponding instinct of obedience, which made the position of the Pope of Rome seem natural, and assured his authority over his flock, were powerless across the *mare sævum* which separated Italy from Africa.

The wild, untamable Berber nature, with its incapacity for sustained unity of action, its devouring passion for freedom, and its love of extremes, rendered the problems which faced Cyprian and those who came after him very different from those which had to be dealt with elsewhere. The righteous anger of Tertullian at the evils which he saw in the Church drove him first into the schism of Montanus, and then into practical isolation; and this was only the beginning of that spirit of uncompromising and inflexible intolerance which rent the Church asunder. A man who will not forgive must himself need no forgiveness, and this certainly was not the case with those whom we know as Donatists, men who had only reached the familiar level of those who have religion enough to make them hate, but not enough to make them love one another.

The persecutions, as has been said, were fierce but intermittent. Their ferocity drove many of the more timid Christians into compliance with the requirements of the law, if not into apostasy. Many (*sacrificati*) yielded altogether and burned incense to Cæsar, out of sheer, and surely not unpardonable, terror; others (*libellatici*) purchased from the authorities false certificates (*libella*) declaring that they had thus complied; others fled. And then peace returned, and all these had to be dealt with. How were they

to be treated by those who had dared and faced the storm unshaken? Were they to remain for ever excommunicate? or were they to be received back, and, if so, on what terms?

Then, as there was cowardice on the one side, there was reckless bravado on the other. As there were those who gave way, so there were others who presented themselves, unbidden, before the tribunals, denounced themselves as Christians, and demanded martyrdom. When inquisition was being made for the Holy Books, as there were those (*traditores*) who gave them up, there were those also who declared falsely that they possessed, but would not surrender, them.

Besides these fanatics, who in the piquant words of Sulpicius Severus, "coveted martyrdom as eagerly as men now covet a bishopric," we are told that the gaols were thronged with others, spendthrifts and profligates, bankrupt in fortune and character, who, to escape a life of disgrace or poverty, were willing to purchase heaven at the price of martyrdom, or the glory of confessorship at the cost of a short imprisonment, rendered easy by the alms of the faithful. If such met with the death they coveted, were they to be enrolled in the noble army of martyrs? If they escaped, were they to be admitted into the glorious company of confessors?

Cyprian had dealt with these cases with his usual sanctified common sense, and so long as he lived, his enormous authority secured acquiescence with his decisions, and the unity of the Church, though threatened by Felicissimus and others, was not destroyed. So matters remained during the years of comparative peace which elapsed between the death of the great Archbishop and the persecution ordered by Diocletian, A.D. 293.

The Bishop of Carthage, during the persecutions of Diocletian, and until the victory of Constantine at the Milvian Bridge, A.D. 312, gave peace to the Church, was Mensurinus. When commanded to surrender the Holy Books, he and his Archdeacon Cæcilian had evaded the danger and the difficulty, by hiding the books and surrendering a number of heretical writings which they had collected for the purpose. On his death Cæcilian was elected Bishop in his place with rather indecent haste. A number of Numidian bishops, who came to oppose the election, but arrived too late, complained bitterly that the election had been hurried on in order to exclude their votes. Seizing upon the accusation of being a *traditor*, brought, falsely, as it turned out, against Felix, Bishop of Aptonga, who had consecrated Cæcilian, they declared the election to be void, and proceeded to elect one of their own number, Majorinus, in his place. Thus began the first formal and open schism that had befallen the Christian Church.

After a careful and patient inquiry by the Emperor, Felix was acquitted, and the election and consecration of Cæcilian were pronounced valid.

In A.D. 315 Majorinus died, and his place was taken by Donatus, from whom<sup>1</sup> the whole movement took its name. He was a man of great learning and ability, eloquent and earnest, but hard, proud, unloving, and overbearing. Now also the Donatists, in their struggle against the authority of the Emperor, began to make common cause with the Circumcelliones,<sup>2</sup> who were destined from thenceforth to be both the strength and the scandal of the party.

The origin of this wild sect of fanatics is unknown.

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps another Donatus, Bishop of Casæ Nigræ, in Numidia.

<sup>2</sup> Or "Agonistici," as they preferred to call themselves.

They are supposed to have got their name from their habit of wandering from house to house begging, like the Marabouts of to-day. Their distinguishing marks were their wild extravagances, and their contempt for life—their own or anybody else's. In the distant villages of Numidia and Mauretania, amongst a savage, half-nomad race, never really subdued to Rome, and only half converted to Christianity, their doctrines were received with enthusiasm. Driven from their homes by the officers of justice, the wild peasantry dropped easily and gladly back into a nomad life of idleness and plunder. Carrying no swords, for these they held to be forbidden by our Lord, but armed with heavy clubs which they called *Israelites*, they haunted the fringe of the desert in marauding gangs which were the terror of the open country. As with David in Adullam, "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented gathered themselves unto"<sup>1</sup> them. Giving and receiving no quarter, they were not afraid to meet even the Imperial troops in open battle. Their contempt for law and order was only equalled by their scorn and hatred of their brother Christians. Every convert was rebaptized, after doing open penance. If a church fell into their hands, the walls were scraped, the wooden Altar burnt, the holy vessels melted, and the consecrated elements given to the dogs.

Tired out with their excesses, and despairing of gaining peace by force, Constantine exhorted the Proconsul Ursacius to try to come to terms with them, but their only reply was that they would have nothing to do with "his fool of a Bishop." In A.D. 330 Donatus held a synod at which two hundred and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xxii. 2.

seventy bishops were present. Soon his followers, representing as they did the cause of opposition to the hated authority of Rome, became the popular party throughout North Africa.

In truth the support of Constantine was very far from being an unmixed blessing to the Church, for it robbed her largely of the popular support which had hitherto enabled her to withstand the persecutions of the Emperors and the encroachments of the Popes of Rome. Now the position of the Church, identified in men's minds with the cause of an unpopular dynasty, was not unlike that of the Church of England at the Rebellion.

Efforts for peace were made in vain by Constans and Gregorius; at last the excesses of the Circumcelliones became so monstrous that Donatus himself was obliged to call in the secular arm to moderate them.

It is necessary to have seen the self-inflicted tortures of the Aïssaouas—to have seen men on their knees, fawning and begging like dogs to be given a living scorpion to eat, or a piece of glass to crunch or nails to swallow—to realise or believe what African nature is capable of under the stress of religious excitement. Multitudes invaded the heathen temples at the hour of worship demanding martyrdom; law courts were thronged and judges frightened into ordering them to execution; the day and hour were advertised when they would throw themselves over precipices to certain death; travellers were stopped and threatened with instant death if they refused to kill the suppliants at their feet. A story is told of a young man who, thus threatened, consented to grant their request on condition they allowed themselves to be bound first, for fear they should change their

mind; they consented, whereupon he bound them securely and went his way, leaving them where they were. At last the Proconsul, Macarius, interfered, put the disorders down with an iron hand, and Donatus died in exile. Then came the reign of Julian the Apostate (A.D. 361), and his endeavour to destroy the adverse power of the Church by a policy of universal toleration—" *divide et impera.*" All exiled bishops were recalled, and equal rights were given to all. However, in A.D. 363, the Galilæan conquered, and Julian died before his policy had had time to bear permanent fruit, either for good or evil; all he had done was to revive and increase the wild disorder which it had been, ostensibly at least, his object to allay.

Meanwhile the links which bound Africa to Rome were wearing very thin. Driven to despair by the enormities of the Roman Governor, Romanus, Firmus (A.D. 366), one of the richest and most powerful of the Berber princes, raised a revolt in the west, which it needed the presence of Theodosius himself, fresh from his triumphs in Britain, to quell; a service to the Empire which was repaid by his judicial murder at Carthage. In A.D. 386 the chief command in Africa was entrusted to a brother of Firmus, Gildo, a truculent monster, who used his power to practically assert his own independence. With this object he made common cause with the Donatists against the Church, and entered into close alliance with some of the most savage of their bishops, such as Optatus of Thamugadi (Timgad). In the struggle between the Eastern and Western Empires, he threw his whole influence against Honorius and on the side of Arcadius, Emperor of Constantinople. This open rebellion could not be allowed to pass unpunished, and Stilicho, who was to Honorius, his son-in-law, very much what Belisarius

was afterwards to Justinian, declared war, and gave the supreme command to Mascazel, another brother of Firmus. An almost bloodless victory ended the revolt, and Gildo, like Firmus, committed suicide on the island of Tabarka (*Thabraka*), whither he had fled for refuge. Mascazel returned in triumph to Milan, to give an account of his success to Honorius. He was received with many expressions of gratitude. A few days later, when crossing a bridge side by side with Stilicho, he was thrown from his horse into the water and allowed to drown (A.D. 398). In A.D. 405 Honorius issued an edict against the Donatists, which bore fruit at Carthage in the reconciliation of the Church and the healing of a long and wanton schism. Elsewhere, however, as at Hippo, where the division was so bitter that a Donatist baker would not make bread for a Churchman, it was only met by a threat on the part of the Donatists to cross over into Italy and join Alaric the Visigoth in his threatened attack on Rome. Alarmed at such a prospect, Honorius withdrew the edict, and summoned a council of Churchmen and Donatists at Carthage, to discuss the matters in dispute. Seven disputants were appointed on each side, the most prominent amongst them being Augustine.

It is strange that of the three great men who made the Church of Africa illustrious, no one was born or brought up a Christian. Two were frankly pagan, and the third a Manichee. For our present purpose, it is enough to say that the teaching of Manes was an attempt to graft on Christianity the Persian doctrine of the eternity of Evil as well as of Good, each being the attribute of an eternal principle or God. Although under the teaching of Ambrose of Milan, Augustine escaped from this heresy, his views to the end were

strongly influenced by it. Of his doctrines of predestination,<sup>1</sup> acquiesced in by the Church when presented under the ægis of the saint, but repudiated when they were revived by Jansenius and developed logically by Calvin, we need say nothing ; but his views as to the inherent evil of matter, both of the world and of the body, concern us because they led him to introduce, and, so far as he was able, to develop, monasticism in Africa. Ambrose had influenced him profoundly ; his teaching had made him a Christian, and the splendour of his rule at Milan made him through life a model to his young convert. Especially Augustine had seen there and studied at first hand the practice of the monastic life, which, with its austerities and its implied teaching that holiness could only be sought in separation from an evil world and the crushing of the appetites of the body, appealed strongly, not only to his ardent African temperament, but also to the taint of the old Manichean teaching from which he never wholly freed himself.<sup>2</sup> On his return to Africa, he resolved to put in practice what he had seen and admired. Arrived at his old home and birthplace at Souk Ahras (Thagaste), he sold his possessions, with the exception of a house near the gate of the city ; there he installed himself with his two friends, Alypius and Evodius. Later he founded a regular monastery at Hippo, in a house put at his disposal by the Bishop Valerius, by whom he was ordained priest, A.D. 391. Several bishops were chosen from among the inmates,

<sup>1</sup> Writing of the Pelagians at Rome (A.D. 409), he says, " Many remained unsaved, not because they refuse to be saved, but because God wills that they should not be." (*Ep. ad Vital.*)

<sup>2</sup> Monasticism was introduced from Egypt into Christianity by Pachomios, a former priest of Serapis, who founded the first community at Tabennisi, A.D. 322. Apparently the system reached Egypt from India about B.C. 340. Cf. *Egypt and Israel*, p. 133.

Augustine himself among the number,<sup>1</sup> and these carried the rule into their dioceses. Supported by the great name of Augustine, such establishments spread with extraordinary rapidity. Fulgentius founded four in the Byzacene—one in the mountains of Mididi; another at Ruspœ near Sfax; a third on the islands of Kerkennah, on the coast of Tunisia, off Sfax, famous as the place of refuge for Hannibal, and perhaps even more as being the fabled home of Circe, as Djerba, a little farther south, was of the Lotus Eaters; the site of the fourth is not known. By the end of the fourth century, Carthage had its convents, and soon the country was covered with them. At Lamta (*Leptis Minor*), Sousse (*Hadrumetum*), on the islands of El Kneis and Thabarka; near the present Kairouan; at Kairin and Monastir; at Sbeitla (*Sufetula*) and Haidra (*Ammœdara*); at Tebessa and Timgad. That at Timgad is now in course of excavation; it is remarkable for the grandeur of the church and the richness of the mosaics of the baptistery; that at Tebessa, the most important of all, is described elsewhere.

Into the controversy with the Donatists, Augustine threw himself with all the energy of his nature and all the weight which his influence, his learning, and his intellect gave him. For four years (A.D. 408–412) the debates lasted, during which time Rome had been taken, sacked, and evacuated by the Visigoths, and Alaric had died. And now, freed from these embarrassments, Honorius was able to give his attention to the matter. The verdict of the council was against the Donatists on all points, and the Emperor was called upon to give effect to its decisions.

Three hundred bishops were deprived, thousands

<sup>1</sup> Augustine was associated with Valerius as Coadjutor Bishop of Hippo, A.D. 391.

of the inferior clergy were torn from their churches and banished, the congregations were broken up, and deprived of the right of public worship. These severities met with the full approval of Augustine, who openly asserted and defended the justice and propriety of persecution. In many cases, as at Constantine (*Cirta*), the Donatists accepted the decision and were reconciled in a body ; but the more fanatical of their number were driven only to the still wilder excesses of despair, and the country was filled with armed bands who turned their weapons with equal readiness against their enemies and themselves. On such scenes as these the dying eyes of Honorius were closed (A.D. 423).

## CHAPTER XI

### CADAVER URBIS<sup>1</sup>

#### CARTHAGE

BEFORE saying farewell to Carthage, let us climb the steep street of Sidi bou Said, which lies on the slope of Cape Carthage,<sup>2</sup> and from the lighthouse, which has taken the place of the old Pharos, look out on the scene of the tragedy of nearly three thousand years.

With the exception of the village below us, and of certain buildings which Cardinal Lavigerie erected on Byrē and elsewhere, all must now be strangely like what Elissar saw before the first stone of her city was laid. Beyond the fan-shaped peninsula where Carthage stood, we look over the isthmus between the Lake of Tunis and the Sebka er Riana to the range of Djebel Sidi Ahmor which cut it off from the mainland. Where the mountains touch the lake, lie the white houses and domes of Tunis between the waters of the lake on one side and those of the Sebka er Sedjoui on the other. Farther to the left, over La Goulette, the palisades which shut in the lake, lie the little watering-places of Rades (Maxula) and Hammam Lif; above these rise the crescent heights of Bou Kornein, and, higher still, the distant crags of Zaghouan, from which Carthage drew its supply of water. The fine ruins of the Nympheum still mark the spot where the aqueduct started from the springs. Somewhere in the hills behind Bou Kornein

<sup>1</sup> "Uno loco tot oppidum cadavera projecta jaceant."—Cic., Ep. iv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The cape rises to a height of 393 feet above the sea.

lies the defile of the Hatchet, where Carthage executed her vengeance on the mercenaries, and the site of the camp and town of Nephesis. Farther still to the left are the blue waters of the Gulf of Tunis, shut in by the range of mountains which end in Cape Bon. There it was that Regulus landed and Cyprian was banished.

To our right and left, as we stand on the lighthouse, run the hills, but the plain before us is unbroken save by two or three insignificant knolls, of which Byrsa, crowned by the new cathedral, is the highest. The levels are green with barley, the more broken land is covered with rank grass, sweet with wild thyme, asphodel, and mignonette nearly five feet high. Here and there, especially on the slopes of Byrsa, is a gorgeous blaze of golden pyrethrum. And that is all. Two vast cities have run their course there; of the former no traces remain save two little ponds, some tombs, and a layer of ashes; of the latter only some foundations—" *etiam periere ruinæ.*"

To our right as we stand on the Pharos, the ground sinks rapidly, and a little valley opens from the plain to the sea. Where now stands the pleasant little watering-place of La Marsa, with the palace of the Bey on one side and the *Residence de France* on the other, lay the villa of Cyprian. Here it was that he was arrested. The *Ager Sexti*, where he was tried and martyred, lay a little farther inland where we now see the English Consulate. Farther still, between us and Byrsa, stands a cross on the little mound called Koudiat Sousou, which marks, as near as may be, the *Area Macrobiani*, the Cemetery of Macrobius, where he was buried.

Beyond La Marsa the ground rises again, almost as rapidly as it fell, into the heights of Djebel Khaoui, the Hollow Mountain, ending in Cape Kamart. All

this ground was covered with the villas of Megara ; the wealthy merchants of Tunis are beginning to replace them with houses of their own. Where Kamart looks down on the shore of the Sebka, Scipio stormed Megara, but was forced to retreat.

On Djebel Khaoui lay the Jewish Cemetery ; the hill gets its name from the multitude of sepulchres with which its surface is undermined. The tombs are of a type with which the Holy Land has made us familiar. A square hole sunk in the rock to a depth of four or five feet opens, by a small entrance which can be closed by a stone, into a chamber in the rock about twelve feet square and six high. On each side of the chamber are three *loculi*, two and a half feet square and six feet deep, in which the dead were laid ; the entrance was then cemented over. Sometimes one of these *loculi* was enlarged, and opened into a further chamber similar to the first. The enormous number of tombs testifies to the size of the Jewish population. The White Fathers, from Byrsa, have a little settlement on the hill. When we visited the spot they were engaged in excavating a very large tomb which they had discovered in their plot of ground.

Near the Cross of Cyprian are the remains of the cisterns of La Malga. They were fifteen in number, and were fed by the aqueduct which Hadrian constructed from Djebel Zaghouan, a distance of nearly sixty miles. Traces of the aqueduct can be seen close by. Long stretches of it still lie between Tunis and the Bardo, and span the plain near Oudna. In their present form the cisterns are certainly Roman, but probably they are the successors of Punic works of the same description. For the most part they have been destroyed ; the fragments which remain are sufficient to form an Arab village, and provide shelter for the beasts.

Near the cisterns are other ruins of importance—the house of the charioteer Scorpionus, and the two cemeteries of the Roman officials. It was here that, on his entrance into Carthage, the ferocious Hunneric trampled beneath his horses' hoofs the bishops and the clergy who had come out to meet him.

The graves in the cemeteries are very simple—a *cippus* of masonry containing two or three urns. Their peculiarity is the funnel which leads to the surface, by which libations could reach the ashes of the dead. Some of the imprecations which, written on thin sheets of lead, were dropped into these funnels, have been described already. One or two, of a somewhat different character, may be noticed here. Here is one :<sup>1</sup>—

“Te rogo qui infernales partes tenes commendo tibi Julia Faustilla Marii filia ut eam celerius abducas et ibi in numerum tu abias.”

On the other side, which is injured, we read :—

“... Faustilla ut eam celerius abducas infernalis partibus in numeru tu abias.”

“I invoke thee, who reignest over the infernal regions, I commend to thee Julia Faustilla, daughter of Marius, that thou mayest carry her off as quickly as may be, and there keep her, in the number of thy people.”

Another, surrounded with magical names in Greek, runs as follows :<sup>2</sup>—

URATUR  
SUCESA  
ADURATUR  
AMORE VET  
DESIDRI  
SUCESI

“May Successa be burnt and consumed with love and desire for Successus.”

<sup>1</sup> C.I.L. 12505.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 12507.

Not far off is the amphitheatre, the scene of the martyrdom of Perpetua and many others. Not so large as the Colosseum, but two storeys higher, it must have been a building of great magnificence. The arrangements differed from those at Rome, in that the arena was solid ground instead of being a movable platform. The dens for wild beasts and other necessary rooms, which at Rome were under the arena, are here in the *podium*, which lifted the ranges of seats to a safe height above the arena. All over the arena was found a layer of reddish sand, about eighteen inches thick; it recalls the seas of blood which have flowed there, even if it does not owe its discoloration to them. Below the centre of the arena was found a large vaulted chamber; probably this was the *carcer* in which the martyrs, and others who were to fight the wild beasts, were confined and prepared for the terrible ordeal. On a marble pillar preserved in the vault is a most human document: it is an inscription of a single word, EVASI, "I have escaped," doubtless from the paw of the lion. The vault has now been fitted up as a chapel to St. Perpetua.

In the arena has been found also a square pit, communicating with an underground passage. Probably it was a trap-door through which the beasts could be lifted on to the stage. Here it was that the seal of Mercury, with his red-hot iron, was found. Another *tabula execrationis* was found here; it runs as follows:—

"O Demon, bind and fetter fast Maurussus, whom Felicitas brought into the world.

"Rob of his slumber that he may not be able to sleep, Maurussus, whom Felicitas brought into the world.

"Almighty God, take to the nethermost hell Maurussus, whom Felicitas brought into the world.

"Thou that reignest over the countries of Italy and Campania, Thou

whose power extends over the Acherusian Lake, take to the abodes of Tartarus, within the space of seven days, Maurusus, whom Felicitas brought into the world.

“Demon, who rulest over Spain and Africa, thou who alone canst cross the sea, counteract every remedy, every charm, every medicine, every libation of oil.” (*Ruines de Carthage*, p. 16.)

And so on. It is interesting to notice that, as is usual in such magical incantations, the victim is described as the son, not of his father, but of his mother.

Here also were found two votive plates of metal, shaped like feet, which have been noticed already. They bear no legible inscription.

Until the Middle Ages the amphitheatre was fairly perfect. It was destroyed by the Arabs, partly for the sake of the stones; even more to get at the copper clamps, set in lead, which bound the stones together; the surface of the Colosseum has been marred by the same Vandalism. Close by is the Koudiat Tsalli.

Still a little farther south are the remains of the circus. The *spina* was three hundred and thirty yards long, the circus itself nearly double that length. It would accommodate about three hundred thousand spectators. In A.D. 536, and again in the following year, the mutinous Byzantine soldiers fortified themselves within it. After that it was completely destroyed.

Returning past the amphitheatre and the Cross of St. Cyprian we reach the theatre, hollowed out of the side of a little hill. Here Apuleius pronounced one of his celebrated discourses, and Tertullian scandalised the people by coming in morning dress. We may remember that Augustine, in his *Confessions*, takes himself severely to task for his love of theatrical performances. It was destroyed and burnt by the Vandals in A.D. 439. A few tolerable statues have

been found there, including a colossal Apollo leaning on his tripod and a beautiful Demeter. These are now in the Bardo.

Close by stood the Odeum, or Opera-House. It was erected A.D. 204, when the Carthaginians obtained leave to celebrate the Pythian Games. It was like the theatre, only smaller and roofed in, and shared its fate. Little of it now remains; but the best statues yet unearthed at Carthage have been found here; two, one of Venus and another of Juno Regina, so called, are really fine.

Byrsa, which should be the most interesting site in all Carthage, is, partly perhaps on that account, the most disappointing. The destruction has been more thorough even than elsewhere, and the site is covered with modern buildings which have nothing to recommend them except that they are the burial-place of the great Cardinal Lavigerie. Of Punic work not a wrack remains except one doubtful piece of wall. No trace is left of the great Temple of Eschmoun which saw the double tragedy of the beginning and end of Karthhadack, when Elissar threw herself upon the pyre, and when the wife of Hasdrubal cast herself and her children into the blazing ruins of the temple. Standing out in front have been found some bases of columns belonging to the Temple of Æsculapius, which took its place, but these are the only fragments which have been identified. Behind them, in the garden of the Primatial, stands the paltry little chapel of St. Louis of France, who died here on his crusade against Tunis. He was buried in the wonderful church of Monreale above Palermo; but some relics have been brought back and lie in the new cathedral.

In front of and below the chapel lie a series of seven apsidal chambers, nearly sixty yards in length;

the middle and most important room was lined with marble, the others with stucco. They probably belong to the time when Augustus had the site levelled, and were the undercroft of some important building.

Ruins, possibly of the Capitoline Temple, lie under the cathedral; amongst them were found a colossal Victory, recalling the Nike of Samothrace, and two huge reliefs of Abundance. The only ruins above ground lie by the side of the cathedral; perhaps they belonged to the Proconsular Palace.

At the south-east side of the hill a fine piece of wall has been laid bare, which is, perhaps, Punic; and a curious crypt, perhaps—for everything here is "perhaps"—a prison. Later on it was consecrated as a chapel in honour of some saints who, possibly, had been confined there. The walls were decorated with rude paintings of saints with haloes, a pagan sign of canonisation which the Church hesitated long before she could accept. The paintings have faded, but a copy has been placed in the Museum.

Hard by is a Punic necropolis; the graves are protected by triangular vaults of large stones. Near this has been found a plague pit, containing some hundreds of skeletons. Probably it dates from the great pestilence of 196 B.C.

A little farther on are the trifling remains of a curious wall built entirely of *amphoræ*. The dates on the jars—45–15 B.C.—show that it belongs to the time of Augustus. Except that the *amphoræ* are unbroken, it reminds us of the Monte Testaccio at Rome.

Near the shore, about six hundred yards from the foot of Byrsa, lie two little ponds. The nearer is bent like the blade of a sickle, the other is long and straight like its handle. Next to Byrsa itself, these

are the most interesting relics of old Carthage; for they represent the famous ports which the Dido was excavating when Æneas came.

When, in A.D. 698, Hassan destroyed Carthage, he filled up the harbours for fear Carthage should again rise from the dust to rival his Capital at Tunis. Quite recently they have been dug out, but only in part, so the ponds mark the position, but give no idea of the size of the original ports. The nearer takes the place of the circular Cothon, and it is pleasant to imagine that a depression between it and the sea marks the channel cut by the Carthaginians after the entrance had been blocked by the mole of Scipio. In the centre is the island on which stood the Admiral's house, surmounted by a tower. On this island excavations are now being carried on by the soldiers. The officer who was directing the work pointed out how the digging proved the accuracy of the old descriptions. Many of the pillars and other broken fragments unearthed were certainly Roman, but the great stones of the foundations are marked with the *Tanith* in red paint, and are equally certainly Punic.

The passage from the naval to the commercial port and from this to the sea is still blocked, but the remains of the breakwater, and of the vast mole of Scipio, are visible. Very careful soundings were made by Lieut. de Roquefeuil, in 1898, but the conclusions arrived at are still precarious.

Close to the Cothon, between it and Byrsa, lay the Forum, or Agora, where Scipio halted for a night before his awful onslaught on the city. Here Bomilcar was crucified for aspiring to kingly power, and many an unfortunate general or admiral paid the same penalty for failure. Here also stood the statue of

Apollo in robes of gold, which formed part of the booty of Scipio.

Walking by the shore, along the lines of the ancient quays towards Bordj Djedid, we pass the ruins of the huge Thermæ of Antoninus, now called Dermech, a corruption of the word "thermæ." Then, turning to the left, we reach the cisterns which fed the baths. The Arabs call them "Mouadjel ech Cheiatin," "The Devil's Cisterns." They consist of seventeen parallel chambers, one hundred feet long, twenty-four feet wide, and thirty high; at the ends of these run two more, four hundred and fifty feet long. The reservoirs communicate with one another by openings high up in the wall, to ensure an equal depth of water in them all, and to allow all sediment to sink, as the water made its way slowly from one chamber to another. Any reservoir could be isolated and cleaned by means of sluice gates and air- or man-holes in the crown of the vault. The "Sette-Salle" at Rome were built on the same principle. They have been restored and are in use now. The total contents are put at twenty-five or thirty thousand cubic yards.

Close by is a little Christian basilica, with beautiful mosaic floors. It is strange that of all the churches of Carthage so few have been discovered and none identified.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the right and passing the Theatre and Odeum, we reach the great Basilica known as the Damous-el-Karita, "Domus Caritatis," "The House of Love." It stands in the centre of a vast Christian cemetery, and must have been one of the grandest churches of Carthage, if not of all Africa.

The church is rectangular, with an apse to the south. Its total length is two hundred and sixteen

<sup>1</sup> The names of twenty-eight are known.



CISTERNS AT CARTHAGE



TUNIS

181 1000  
10000000

feet, its breadth is one hundred and fifty. It consists of a nave and transept, each forty feet broad; on each side of the nave are four aisles. At the intersection of the nave and transept, the bases of four pillars mark the site of the "Ciborium," under which stood the wooden altar. In the transept, one bay east of the altar, are the remains of another apse, and the great arcade of pillars has been carried right across the nave, thus giving the appearance of a church orientated east and west. This was doubtless the work of some late restorers, probably the Byzantines, who found the church in ruins and restored only part of it.

The chief door was at the north end of the nave, and opened into a great semicircular atrium, surrounded, like the Temple of Cœlestis at Dougga, with a pillared cloister. In the centre, forming a sort of nymphæum, was a range of pillars and a large octagonal fountain.

In the centre of the cloister, opposite the great door of the church, is an opening into a trefoiled chapel or *trichorum* very like that at Tebessa, doubtless the shrine or chapel of some now-unknown saint or martyr. In the apse opposite the entrance is the base on which stood a sarcophagus or *mensa martyrum*. The space round it is crowded with tombs. The whole stands on the site of an old Columbarium.

On the other side of the church stood the baptistery, large enough to be a second church, for it was one hundred and twenty feet by eighty. In the centre, approached by steps and surrounded with pillars of white marble, was the hexagonal font. Still farther to the south stood a little apsidal chapel, with niches on each side. This was doubtless the sacristy, where

the robes and other necessities for the administration of the sacrament were kept. To the east and west are some little rooms, probably vestries and dressing-rooms for the candidates for baptism.

The whole of the great mass of buildings is surrounded with numberless other chambers and houses for the clergy, and a bishop's palace, but these have as yet been only partially excavated.

More than fourteen thousand fragments of bas-reliefs and inscriptions, giving at least four hundred names, have been discovered. Often these are the names of martyrs, but probably this is accidental, or, at most, they came from some memorial, not from the tomb-stones of the martyrs themselves. The carvings are of the usual subjects with which we are familiar in the catacombs of Rome and elsewhere—the Good Shepherd, the Angels appearing to the Shepherds, the multiplication of the loaves, the Fall, St. Peter with his cock, St. Paul preaching, the Three Children, and so on. Amongst the symbols used are the Lamb, the Fish, the Anchor, the Ship, the Lighthouse, the Dove with the Olive Branch, the Peacock, the Crown, the Palm and the Vine.

The epitaphs do not require notice ; for the most part, they consist of little more than names, followed, in the earlier cases, by the words *IN PACE*, in the later ones by *FIDELIS*.

Such is Carthage.

## CHAPTER XII

RES ULTIMÆ, A.D. 423-550

### THE VANDALS

THE final downfall of the tottering Empire of Rome was wrought by the flooding of the civilised provinces of the south—Gaul, Spain, and finally Italy itself—by stream after stream of the strong, virile races of the north and east.

Amongst the hordes which, at the beginning of the fifth century, under the pressure of the Huns and Sarmatians in their rear, became dislodged like an avalanche or landslide, and swept south and west in the army of Rhodogast or Rodogaisus, were the Vandals. We first find them in the second century, settled to the south of the Baltic ; a southern division of the race, living in Bohemia, took part in the Marcomannic Wars of A.D. 167-179. About the middle of the third century they joined the Goths and occupied Dacia and the country north of the Black Sea ; in A.D. 277 the Emperor Probus planted a colony of them in Britain. In the year A.D. 405 they joined the Alani, Burgundians, and Suevi, and invaded Italy under the banner of Rhodogast. Whilst besieging Florence they were surrounded by the Romans under Stilicho and compelled to surrender with a loss of twenty thousand men, including their king. Next year, A.D. 406, they moved towards Gaul, and were again defeated by the Franks. However, they rejoined their old allies, the Alani, Suevi, and Burgundians,

and with them crossed the Rhone on the last day of A.D. 406, and never returned. It is from this memorable passage that Gibbon dates the Fall of the Roman Empire in the countries beyond the Alps.

This movement to the west is said to have been made at the suggestion of Stilicho, who was himself of Vandal stock. Probably this is untrue, but it was undoubtedly his policy to defend Italy at the expense of the outlying provinces, which he could no longer hold. Thus, "the barriers which had so long separated the savage from the civilised nations of the earth were from that fatal moment levelled with the ground."

In less than two years, A.D. 409, the Vandals had reached the Pyrenees; and, leaving their allies behind them, to help towards the making of modern France, they poured over the mountain passes into Spain. There they parted into three bands. One drifted to the west, into Tarrantum; another south-west, into Lusitania; the rest made their way due south into Bœtica. By the year A.D. 422, they had taken Seville and Carthagenæ, and occupied the southern provinces of Spain, to which their coming gave the new name of Andalusia.

But even this was not destined to be their final resting-place. In A.D. 423, the Emperor Honorius died, and, after the usual interval of confusion, and the attempted usurpation of the throne by his principal secretary (*primicerius*) John, aided and abetted by his great general Aëtius, his son Valentinian III. succeeded to the vacant throne, at the age of six years. During the long minority of the young Emperor the reins of power were in the hands of his mother, Galla Placidia, a strangely interesting woman, daughter, sister, wife, and mother of Emperors of Rome. At

one time, as wife of Athaulphus (Adolphus), brother-in-law of Alaric, she had reigned as Queen of the Goths ; then she had been the victim and slave of his murderer, Singeric ; next, as wife of the brave Constantius, she had become Empress of Rome ; on his death she had been driven as an exile to the Court of Theodosius at Constantinople ; now she returned in triumph to Italy as Empress in all but name. Her lovely tomb at Ravenna is almost the last possibility of beauty in mosaic.<sup>1</sup>

The task of restoring order in Africa, of reviving the waning spirit of allegiance, of curbing the wild excesses of the Donatists and giving peace to the distracted country, was entrusted by Placidia to Count Boniface, a strange mixture of Saint, Knight and *Condottiero*. His defence of Marseilles attested his military skill, his personal courage had won him the respect and fear of the barbarians, his warm friendship with the aged Augustine made him acceptable to the Church, the tried probity of his character and the sternness of his even-handed justice made him worthy of the dignity given to him, while his devoted loyalty to Placidia was proved by the fact that during her exile at Constantinople he alone had remained faithful to her, and that money and troops supplied by him had contributed largely to the suppression of the revolt of John.

Unhappily for Boniface, he left near the throne at Ravenna his great and unscrupulous rival, Aëtius, a man who, though his defeat of Attila, the Scourge of God, on the field of Châlons, put his military genius

<sup>1</sup> The sarcophagus of Athaulphus (Athanulph) still stands in the Church of S. Aquilinus which he founded at Milan. The sarcophagus of Galla Placidia, at Ravenna, stands between those of Honorius and Constantius. These are, apparently, the only Imperial tombs which have never been moved. Her daughter Honoria lies in the same chapel.

beyond the reach of doubt, had shown by his support of the usurper John, that his loyalty could not be depended upon.

Aëtius took advantage of the absence of Boniface to gain complete ascendancy over the mind of Galla Placidia, and by his intrigues and treachery undermined her confidence in her one loyal subject. So well did he succeed that at last Boniface was driven, in self-defence, to the rebellion of which he had been unjustly accused.

In spite of a touching letter from Augustine, imploring him not to plunge the country and empire into a parricidal war, Boniface, A.D. 428, invited the Vandals to come over from Spain and help him. All the country west of the Ampsagas<sup>1</sup> was to be theirs, on condition that they guaranteed him the peaceful and undisturbed possession of the rest.

The invitation came at a most opportune moment. The Vandal King, Godigisclus, had fallen in battle on the other side of the Rhine, and now his son and successor, Gontharis, had been murdered by his bastard brother, the terrible Geiseric, or Genseric, a name which deservedly ranks with those of Alaric and Attila. Base-born, of small stature, slow of speech, deformed in body by a fall from his horse, he was destined for the next forty years to prove that his vast ambition was justified by a dauntless courage, a genius for war, and an aptitude for state-craft which were unhampered by any scruples of pity or of honour.

Nothing could suit such a man better than such an invitation. In A.D. 429 he crossed from Gibraltar to Ceuta in ships supplied by the anxious Boniface and the still more anxious Spaniards. Surely never was

<sup>1</sup> The Oued-el-Kebir, which falls into the sea north of Constantine, near Djidjeli.

guest so sped on his departure and so welcomed on his arrival. With him he brought a mixed multitude, a nation rather than an army, eighty or ninety thousand strong, of whom about half were soldiers. Like all invaders of Africa, he was hailed as a deliverer, and his success was immediate and complete; but his coming set the country in a blaze. All the elements of disorder which the firm rule of Boniface had kept in control, broke loose; the natives rose against the Roman sway, while the Donatists, after seventeen years of rigorous suppression and proscription, naturally joined the Arian invaders, who were bound to them by that strongest of all ties, a common hatred of the Church.

That Genseric should confine himself within the borders assigned him longer than suited his purpose, was more than could be expected, and Boniface soon realised his mistake. Friends visited him from the Court of Ravenna, and returned bearing with them the forged letters which disclosed the treachery of Aëtius; the breach between Boniface and Placidia was healed, and Boniface determined to resist his formidable allies. But it was too late; he was defeated by Genseric, and at last shut up and besieged in Hippo, where he arrived in time to close the eyes of his friend Augustine, who died there on August 28th, A.D. 430. From May A.D. 430 until July A.D. 431, the siege lasted. Realising the importance of Africa, Placidia implored the help of the Emperor of the East, and Aspar sailed from Constantinople to relieve the besieged city. Thus reinforced, Boniface ventured on a second battle, and his defeat sealed the fate of Roman Africa. In despair, he left Hippo with Aspar, taking his soldiers with him, and leaving the defenceless citizens to the tender mercies of the Vandals.

Near Ravenna he met his rival Aëtius in battle,

and, though victorious, he received a fatal wound, at the hand, it was said, of Aëtius himself. Tradition, or legend, has cast a halo of romance round his death. We are told that the quarrel was decided by a hand-to-hand encounter between the two generals. Owing to the greater length of his spear, Aëtius was victorious, and Boniface, with his last breath, committed his young wife to him as the only man worthy of her.<sup>1</sup> The story is interesting, if only as an anticipation of the tournament as a court of honour, and of the coming ages of romance and chivalry.

In the full tide of victory, Genseric was obliged to pause for a time. Difficulties thickened round him. His advance to the east had left Mauretania almost stripped of troops and open to the ravages of the Romans from Spain: in Numidia the almost impregnable fortress of Cirta (Constantine) defied his arms; and his nephews, the sons of the murdered Gontharis, added to his difficulties by stirring up mutiny in the ranks of his army. It was said that he shed more Vandal blood on the scaffold than on the field of battle, before the disaffection was appeased. Meanwhile, on January 30th, A.D. 435, he made a peace with Valentinian, by which he secured to the Roman Emperor the peaceful possession of Carthage and of the Proconsular province of Africa.

This arrangement lasted just as long as suited the convenience of Genseric. In A.D. 439 he was ready to take the field again. Suddenly, without the slightest notice, he advanced upon Carthage, and surprised and took it, five hundred and thirty years after its capture and destruction by Scipio. The land of

<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar story is told by Gibbon of the death of Stotzas. Cf. Gibbon xi. 3: "He fell in a single combat, but he smiled in the agonies of death, when he was informed that his own javelin had reached the heart of his antagonist."

Proconsular Africa he divided amongst such of his followers as were not already provided for; Carthage he made a pirate stronghold. An alliance with Attila, King of the Huns, secured him from the interference of Rome.

Of all the great barbarian invaders, Genseric seems to have been the ablest and most versatile. Not content with his African conquests, he built a fleet and seized the Balearic Islands, Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia; the Vandal fleet became the scourge of the Mediterranean, as the Barbary corsairs were later on in history. "Whither shall we steer?" asked his ship's master, when starting on one of these buccaneering expeditions. "Where God wills," was Genseric's answer; and "God" seems generally to have "willed" that he should go wherever booty was most plentiful and least protected.

In A.D. 455 Genseric received another invitation, not less agreeable than the first. After murdering Aëtius with his own hand, "cutting off his right hand with his left," the wretched Valentinian III. had been himself murdered by Petronius Maximus, a wealthy senator, whose wife he had debauched. With the throne Maximus seized also the Empress Eudoxia, daughter of Theodosius, Emperor of the East, and made her his wife. The unwilling bride invoked the aid of the terrible King of the Vandals to avenge her wrongs. Such a call was not likely to remain unanswered. Genseric sailed at once, and landed at the mouth of the Tiber, where his arrival was a signal for the murder of Maximus. Advancing boldly from Ostia, he was met at the gate of Rome by the Bishop, Leo, who pleaded for the defenceless city, as he had interceded with Attila. Again he was in part successful. There was no general massacre, and the

city was not destroyed ; but for fourteen days, from June 15th to 29th, it was given up to the will of the wild Vandal and African soldiery to be sacked and systematically looted. Then Genseric returned to Carthage, laden with his priceless booty. Gold and silver statues of the gods, the bronze tiles of the Capitol, which Domitian had gilded at a cost, it is said, of £2,400,000, the golden candlestick and table of showbread from Jerusalem, with other treasures stored in the Temple of Peace in the Forum, all found their way to Carthage ; and Elissar was avenged.

With his other prey, Genseric carried back also the Empress Eudoxia and her two daughters, Eudocia and Placidia, and many thousand prisoners for sale. The elder daughter Eudocia he gave as wife to his son Hunneric ; he also demanded and received from the Emperor Marcian an ample dowry for her as the descendant and heiress of Theodosius. After long delay, Eudoxia and Placidia, who was the wife of a Roman senator, were surrendered and sent to Constantinople. The miseries of the prisoners were alleviated so far as possible by the noble exertions of the Bishop, Deogratias. The gold and silver plate belonging to the churches was sold, to purchase the liberty of some, and food and medicines for others. The churches themselves were transformed into hospitals.

Of the general character of the Vandal sway in North Africa it is very difficult to form a just estimate. We know little of it, except from those who suffered under it, and whose testimony must be received with caution. The mixed multitude which crossed over from Africa had never been very numerous—not more than about ninety thousand, including women and children, and many of these must have

fallen or been left on the way; the population of Carthage alone outnumbered them four- or five-fold. The soldiers who had brought their wives and children with them had, of course, to be provided for; doubtless there were acts of violence and spoliation, but we do not read of any wholesale confiscation of land except in the Proconsular province of Africa—that is, in the neighbourhood of Carthage. It is certain that the Vandals recognised two classes of occupiers: Roman or civil, who paid a contribution in money; and barbarian or military, who gave nothing but military service. Two governments existed side by side. Over the Vandals were set counts and inferior officers, captains of thousands and of hundreds, who exercised military authority in time of war, and civil in time of peace. By the side of these, the Roman organisation remained almost untouched. The old Imperial laws were still administered; Roman officials collected the taxes; Roman magistrates still sat in the cities. The *Defensor Civitatis* still held his tribunal, and appeals were still made to the *Præpositus judiciis Romanis in Regno Africæ Vandalorum*, at Carthage. Except for the dismantling of the walls, the cities were left uninjured, and the Vandals, if they built nothing, wantonly destroyed but little. Certainly they made no deliberate effort to wreck the civilisation they found, or to impose their manners and customs on their Roman subjects. They held and garrisoned Africa, and expected Africa to support them in return; but beyond this, the Romans seem to have suffered little at their hands. The *coloni* remained much what they had been, only now they worked for two masters instead of one. The mountaineers, already half independent, were drafted into the army or manned the fleets.

One exception must be made to this. For many years of his long reign, Genseric, with his Donatist allies, was a relentless persecutor of the Church. The bishops were banished, the churches were closed, and doubtless many who were not attacked as Romans suffered severely as Christians, or rather Churchmen. Yet even here it must be remembered that much of the reckless destruction of churches may safely be put down to the fury of the Donatists. Probably the Church did not suffer more severely at the hands of Genseric than the Donatists themselves had suffered under Boniface.

But, as so often happens in such cases, this comparatively tolerable state of things did not long survive its founder. After the death of Genseric, A.D. 477, the natural turbulence of the wild soldiery, the jealous quarrels of the chiefs, the incursions of the nomads from the desert upon the unwallied cities, the brigandage of the mountaineers, and the ferocious persecution of the Church by Hunneric, soon destroyed the peace and good understanding between the various classes of the inhabitants, which the sagacious policy and firm rule of Genseric had established. Even as far as distant Tipasa, the unhappy Churchmen were pursued by the unrelenting and brutal savagery of their fellow-Christians, whether Arian or Donatist. It was in the Forum of Tipasa, west of Algiers, that the one miracle was worked which Gibbon could neither deny nor explain away, and so merely sneered at, when Restitutus and the other confessors spoke after their tongues had been torn out.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the general character and warlike aptitude of the Vandals were fast declining. It was only seventy years since they had crossed the Rhine.

<sup>1</sup> Modern science, I believe, accepts the fact, but denies the miracle.

but already the heat and enervating climate of their new home, and the still more demoralising ease and luxury of their new surroundings, had sapped their strength and destroyed the hardy virtues of the barbarian, replacing them only with the vices of a degraded civilisation. Moreover, though formidable when collected in an army, the smallness of their numbers became apparent when they were spread over the country as landed proprietors. The kingdom of the Vandals, built up in a day, fell into ruins in a night. In A.D. 406 they crossed the Rhine; in A.D. 429 they reached Africa; in A.D. 477 Genseric died; and in A.D. 533 Belisarius landed.

#### THE BYZANTINES

Old ideas, conceptions, habits of thought, and claims die hard, especially if they minister to the pride of the man or nation who entertains them. The mere fact that they have ceased to be true has little effect beyond that of rendering them more dear, and causing them to be more fondly and obstinately cherished. Men and nations cling to the remembrance of what they once were, partly because it is hard to relinquish the flattering memory, and partly because there is always the possibility, and with it the vague hope, that some unexpected turn of the wheel of fortune may bring the cherished possession within reach again; and then the fact that the claim has never been relinquished makes the new conquest more like the revival of a dormant title than the creation of a new. The fleurs-de-lys of France were borne on the royal standard of England for many a long year after England's last possession in France was gone.

Notably has this been always the case with Rome, Imperial of old as Papal now. Whatever Rome has once become possessed of by force of arms or diplomacy or intrigue, Rome claims for ever, however clearly history may contradict the justice of the original title or the validity of the new.

In the year A.D. 527 the throne of Constantinople was filled by a Dacian peasant born near Sardica, the modern Sofia, in Bulgaria. His name was Uprauda, the Upright, or, in its Latin form, Justinian. He had been raised to the purple by the merits of his uncle Justin, who in a long military service of more than fifty years, had risen from the ranks, through the successive grades of tribune, count, general, until at last, at the age of sixty-eight years, he was elected Emperor. After an uneventful reign of nine years, during which his deficiencies had been covered by the diligence and ability of the Quæstor Proclus, he secured the succession for his nephew, whom he had brought from Dacia and educated at Constantinople.

When Justinian ascended the throne, the dominions of Rome had been definitely separated into the two Empires of East and West for one hundred and thirty years. The Western Empire had long ceased to be Roman, even in name. In Italy the Goths had ruled for fifty years; in Africa the Vandals had held undisputed sway for over a century. All this was fact, but theory did not tally with it. Theoretically the Empire was still one, undivided and indivisible. The possessions of Old Rome had become those of New, automatically, by a natural and indefeasible right of succession, and all intruders, whether Goths or Vandals, were usurpers, to be expelled, rightly and justly, whenever opportunity might serve. How nearly Justinian succeeded, through the genius and

unswerving loyalty of his great general Belisarius, in enforcing the claim and reviving the dying Empire of Rome, does not belong to our subject except in so far as Africa is concerned. Suffice it to say that he made the effort, and, in making it, completed the ruin of Roman and Christian Africa, if not of Italy also.

Justinian had not long to wait for an opportunity for interfering in Africa. The throne of Genseric was occupied by his grandson, Hilderic, who, through his mother Eudocia, could claim descent from the Emperor of Rome on the one side and of Constantinople on the other. He was a gentle, cultured, amiable man, who lacked both the savagery of his father, Hunneric, and the ability of his cousin and predecessor, Thrasimund. His clemency to his Catholic subjects, to whom he granted peace and freedom of worship, was at once his glory and his ruin. The Arian clergy denounced him as an apostate, an accusation to which his friendship with Justinian lent some colour; while the defeat of his general, or Achilles, by a rabble of natives, aroused the indignant contempt of his soldiers for his military incapacity. An insurrection, fomented and headed by his cousin Gelimer, broke out. Hilderic was deposed and thrown into prison, and Gelimer, whose birth and military fame fitted him well for the post, usurped his throne.

On this, A.D. 531, Tripoli revolted, and invited the help of Justinian on behalf of their rightful King. The Emperor at once espoused the cause of his friend, and haughtily warned Gelimer against any further revolt, at the risk of incurring the displeasure of God and of himself. The fierce Vandal replied by increasing the rigour of Hilderic's imprisonment, and, with mutual protestations of sincere desire for peace,

"according to the practice," as Gibbon remarks, "of civilised nations," each side prepared for war.

The command of the Byzantine forces was given by Justinian to the illustrious Belisarius, the third Africanus, one of the greatest generals and noblest men in all history.

Belitzar, the "White Prince," to give him his proper name, was born, says Procopius, "in Germania, between Thrace and Illyria," not very far, that is, from the birthplace of the Emperor himself. He served with distinction in the private guard of Justinian, and, when his patron became Emperor, was promoted to military command. As general of the East he had won renown in an arduous campaign against the Persians, and the new-made peace, to which his prowess largely contributed, set him free for an even more difficult and important operation.

It was on June 22nd, in the year of our Lord 533, and in the seventh year of the reign of Justinian, that the Byzantine Armada sailed from Constantinople for Africa. The vessels of the fleet and transport, six hundred in number, were anchored in front of the palace gardens, where they were reviewed by the Basileus himself. The Patriarch, surrounded by his clergy, descended to the port to pronounce his solemn benediction on the army as it started on its new crusade. Thus, with the happiest auspices, Belisarius entered on the campaign, taking with him as his secretary, his Boswell, Procopius, the future historian of the war. During the whole of the three months that the voyage lasted, not a single Vandal vessel was sighted which might carry to Carthage the news of the approach of the army. A better proof of the decay of Vandal enterprise could hardly be imagined, for, under Genseric, the pirate corsairs of Carthage

had swept the Mediterranean. Belisarius landed at Cape Vada, a desolate strip of beach on the Tripoli border, nine days' march south of Carthage. His advance on the capital was a triumphal progress. The natives hailed him, as they had the Vandals, as a deliverer from a foreign despotism, and willingly supplied the troops with provisions; the Church welcomed him as a saviour from savage persecution; even amongst the Arian Vandals there were many who were unwilling to fight against one who came, nominally at least, to the succour of their rightful King, and the rest were utterly unprepared for organised resistance. On the day after his arrival, the little town of Sullecte opened her gates to him; the more important cities of Leptis Magna, now a vast mass of ruins on the Oued Lebda, sixty miles west of Tripoli, and Hadrumetum (Sousse), followed her example. Indeed it is not easy to see what else they could have done, for the Vandals had destroyed their walls and fortifications. Gelimer could not come to their assistance, for, incredulous as to the coming of the foe, and ignorant of their arrival, he needed time to collect his forces; above all he wished, if possible, not to risk a battle before the arrival of his brother Zano, whom, with his seasoned troops, he had hurriedly summoned from Sardinia.

And so Belisarius was able to advance, cautiously indeed, but unhindered and unopposed, leaving behind him a country quiet and content; men went about their ordinary business, magistrates administered the old laws, only in the new name of Justinian. It was not until he reached the tenth milestone from Carthage ("*Ad Decimum*") that Belisarius encountered an enemy. Here at last Gelimer fell upon him furiously with what forces he could muster, and so fierce was

the onset that the Greek van was beaten back, and for the moment the issue hung in the balance. Then the fall of Ammatas, brother of the King, and a charge of the picked guard led by the general in person, restored the battle, and at last Gelimer fled, utterly routed, towards Numidia, his only consolation in his fall being the knowledge that his last orders for the murder of his innocent cousin, Hilderic, had been punctually carried out.

But, however comforting to him, this turned to the advantage of his enemies; for the death of the King, and the flight of the usurper, left Belisarius free to assume supreme command in the name of Justinian. On the evening after the victory he bivouacked on the field of battle, and on the morrow he entered Carthage. Almost at the same moment the fleet arrived and anchored in the Lake of Tunis. On the eve of St. Cyprian's Day, September 14th, the defeat of the Vandals, and the liberation of Africa from their yoke, were publicly and solemnly proclaimed.

The first task of Belisarius was to strengthen the fortifications of Carthage, for, though the walls had not been destroyed, they had never been repaired, and a hundred years' neglect had very seriously impaired their strength. He set about the work with the amazing energy which characterised all his actions and contributed so largely to his success; a specimen of his work, rude and strong, can still be seen on the south-west corner of the Castro Pretorio at Rome.

The Vandal army had been dispersed in the fight at *Ad Decimum*, but not destroyed. Zano hurried home from Sardinia and joined his brother; and Gelimer, collecting once more his scattered forces, raised his standard at Bulla Regia, near Souk-el-Arba, within a hundred miles of Carthage. Advancing

rapidly on the city, a second battle, in which it would almost seem that Belisarius allowed himself to be surprised, was fought at Tricameron, twenty miles from Carthage. Zano was killed and the Vandals again defeated, although, judging from the number of the killed, it does not seem that they pushed home their attack very vigorously, for in this battle, which ended the Vandal rule in Africa, no more than fifty Greeks and eight hundred Vandals fell. This time Gelimer accepted his defeat as final; after a short flight, he surrendered to Pharas, the officer sent in pursuit of him, and was taken to Constantinople. After adorning the triumph of Belisarius, he was given an ample estate in Galatia, where he lived and died in peace and obscurity.

Thus ended the Vandal dynasty in Africa. Within three months of his arrival, Belisarius was able to send word to Justinian, that Africa was once more a part of the Empire of Rome.

Master by both land and sea, Belisarius despatched the fleet along the coast as far as to the Pillars of Hercules, to receive the submission of the seaboard towns. To Sardinia and Corsica he sent the head of Zano; the argument was convincing, and the islands submitted: the pick of the Vandal soldiery he deported to Constantinople, where they were drafted into the armies of the East, forming five troops known by the name of *Justiniani Vandalici*.

Then he was able to sheathe his sword, and turn to the work of organising the country he had so victoriously won. This he did with consummate energy and skill. Retaining the old province of Africa in his own hands, he sought to secure its safety by surrounding it with palatinates, or border provinces under dukes. Two of these he established

to the south in Leptis and Tripoli, two to the west at Cirta and Cæsarea, and a fifth in the island of Sardinia. To the Church, to whom his victory had given peace, he restored the possessions of which she had been stripped, and the position of pre-eminence which she had held under Roman sway.

Had he been allowed time to complete his work, and to consolidate the new rule with the moderation and wisdom with which he had founded it, the end of the crusade might have been as fortunate as its beginning. Unhappily this was not to be. His enemies at home were more dangerous than any in Africa, and their attacks were far harder to repel. The chief and most formidable of these was Theodora, actress, harlot, devotee, and Empress. The glory of his success was used to arouse the jealous fears of Justinian, and Belisarius was recalled, almost in disgrace. The loyal promptitude of his return silenced the calumnies of his detractors, and he was granted the triumph he had so nobly earned. It was the first that Constantinople had ever seen, and the first granted to a private individual since the days of Tiberius. Amongst the spoil carried in the conqueror's train was the seven-branched candlestick, which at last, after its wanderings from Jerusalem to Rome, and from Rome to Carthage, found a resting-place in the Church of Jerusalem at Constantinople. Since then it has been seen no more.

The history of Africa has no surprises. It is like an old-fashioned song—every verse has new words, but the tune is the same. With that unconquerable love of liberty which is born of the mountains and the sea, the natives have always refused to accept a foreign yoke. They welcomed the Romans as deliverers from the Carthaginians, the Vandals from the Romans, the

Byzantines from the Vandals; now the turn of the Byzantines was come. Carthage had to deal with Syphax or Masinissa, Rome with Tacfarinas<sup>1</sup> and Jugurtha, the Arabs with Kocella and the Kahenah, the French with Abd-el-Kader, Bou Naza, and Bou Bagha. Now the Byzantines met the same spirit in Iabdas and Koutsina.

For the moment all seemed quiet, but beneath the external peace the whole country was seething with a discontent, which needed only the departure of Belisarius to bring it to the surface in open rebellion. Generations of luxury, followed by a century of subjection, had fatally sapped the vigour of the Roman colonists, and there remained to the cities neither the defence of walls and bulwarks, nor the better defence of stout hearts and the old Roman courage, to save them from the wild hordes which once more swept down from the mountains and up from the desert.

Overawed for the moment by the genius of Belisarius, and recognising that in a measure he was doing their work, the natives had either helped him or at least allowed him to pass unscathed; now that he was gone, recalled almost in disgrace, the standard of rebellion was at once raised. A soothsayer or sorceress had promised that Africa should be conquered only by a beardless general, and close inquiry had shown that none of the Byzantine commanders satisfied this requirement. No sooner was Belisarius safely on his way home, than news was brought him that the whole of the Byzacene (Tunisia) and of Numidia was in a blaze.

<sup>1</sup> This African Arminius belonged to the tribe of the Musulamii, south of the Aures. He was able to hold the Roman army in check for seven years, A.D. 17 to 24. Finally he was killed at Aumale.

Belisarius despatched his most trusty lieutenant to deal as best he might with the situation ; this was the eunuch Solomon, who, strangely enough, satisfied the requirement of the Numidian soothsayer.

He soon had his hands full, for he had against him an active and mobile enemy, fighting in and for their own country, an enemy whom it was easy to defeat and disperse, but impossible to conquer or permanently subdue. Marching into the Byzacene, he defeated them at Manme ; attacked on his way back, he turned upon them and defeated them again at Burgeon without losing a man, and so reached Carthage, only to hear that the king, Iabdas, had roused Numidia and was destroying the towns. It was then, A.D. 535, that Thamugadi (Timgad) was wrecked and burnt.

Of the splendid thoroughness and deliberation with which Solomon set himself to protect the country by refortifying the towns, the wonderful system of fortresses which still stud the country bears testimony.

Meanwhile greater troubles were brewing in Carthage.

Justinian, like other men, tried to run his wars and colonies on business principles, and make them pay their way ; and so there came to Africa two Imperial commissioners, Tryphon and Eustratius, to assess and collect taxes, and these men, by the exorbitance of their extortions, soon alienated the only loyal portion of the population.

Again, many of the soldiers had married Vandal women, and quietly annexed the farms ; this land was now claimed for the Emperor and the occupiers evicted.

Religious toleration, as distinct from indifference, is but little understood now ; in the sixth century it was undreamt of, and after a century of ruthless

persecution, the restored Church was not in a mood to use with moderation the power she had regained. As against the Vandals this did not much matter, but, unfortunately, in the army of Solomon there were some four thousand Heruli who were also Arians, and were not at all disposed to accept the alternative of either conforming or being deprived of all religious observances whatever; Christmas had tried their temper, and now the still greater festival of Easter was approaching.

To crown all his troubles, four hundred of the Vandal horsemen who had been deported by Belisarius mutinied at Lesbos, seized a vessel, and compelled the captain to land them near Carthage.

A plot was hatched in the palace to murder Solomon in church on Easter Day, A.D. 536. Through a misunderstanding, or, as Procopius says, "restrained by something Divine," it failed, but a mutiny broke out amongst the troops, which desolated Africa for ten years. Solomon was compelled to take sanctuary in the cathedral, and finally to escape by sea to Syracuse, to invoke the aid of Belisarius.

In his absence the mutineers sacked Carthage and retired to Bule, where they elected Stotzas, a man of great capacity, as their commander. They then returned and besieged the city with ten thousand men.

Belisarius was engaged on what was to be the crowning exploit of his wonderful career, the conquest of the Gothic kingdom of Italy and its union with the Eastern Empire of Constantinople. He had but little time and few men to spare; still, he could not stand calmly on one side and see the ruin of his work in Africa. With a handful of men he at once set sail for Carthage with Solomon. He arrived in the night.

When, in the morning, the news of his coming reached the besieging army, the magic of his name was enough. Some of the mutineers returned to their allegiance; the rest raised the siege and precipitately fled. Getting together a force of two thousand men, Belisarius started in hot pursuit, overtook them at Membressa (Medjez-el-Bab) and inflicted a crushing defeat. Stotzas fled into Numidia, and Belisarius returned to Sicily, leaving two of his officers, Ildiger and Theodorus, in charge pending the arrival of Germanus, nephew of the Emperor, whom Justinian sent as Commander in Africa.

Germanus was worthy of the difficult trust. He took up at once the pursuit of Stotzas, defeated him in Numidia, and drove him back into Mauretania; there, protected by a false report of his death, he remained in peace, married the daughter of a local prince, and, for a time, disappeared from history.

But, like Belisarius, Germanus was not allowed time to finish the work he began so well. After a couple of years, A.D. 539, he was recalled, and the chief command given once more to Solomon, who again showed himself unwise and weak as an administrator, though beyond all question more than capable as a soldier.

In the following year two of his nephews, Cyrus and Sergius, sons of his brother Boccus, came out to join him, and were most unwisely entrusted with the government of Pentapolis and Tripoli. A deputation of eighty Africans, who came to Leptis to tender the submission of their tribe, were treacherously murdered by Sergius, at a banquet given in their honour, and the whole country rose to avenge them. Solomon hastened from Carthage to the assistance of his nephew, but was surprised and killed in battle near Theveste (Tebessa).

In spite of the indignant protest of Antalas, an African chieftain who, after fighting valiantly against the Vandals, had been made the enemy of the Greeks by the murder of his brother, Sergius was appointed Governor in the place of his uncle.

The universal disgust and discontent brought Stotzas on the scene again, only, however, to be defeated and killed in battle by the hand of John, the son of Sisimolus, who had succeeded Solomon. John himself was killed, a few days afterwards, by a fall from his horse.<sup>1</sup>

Too late, Sergius was recalled, and Areobondas, a weak man, unused to war and unskilful in affairs, was made Exarch ; his incapacity was atoned for by his marriage with the niece of the Emperor. He came only to be murdered by the chief of his guard, Gontharis, who himself was murdered by Artaban after a reign of thirty days. Artaban, an Armenian prince, rebelled, was first imprisoned, then pardoned, and finally entrusted with the command of the troops despatched to Italy, and distinguished himself in the war in Sicily.

After the death of Gontharis, another John, "the brother of Pappas," was appointed Governor, A.D. 545. He succeeded in tranquillising Africa, and, with the help of the native chief, Koutsina, repulsed an inroad of the Leucathians from Tripoli ; and so, at last, says Procopius, the Africans, "being very few in number and very poor," had a time of peace.

But these continued and devastating wars were fast reducing the unhappy country to a desert. The Vandals, who, it is estimated, numbered one hundred

<sup>1</sup> This is the account given by Procopius (ii. 18), who adds that John and Stotzas were personal enemies. According to Gibbon (*vide* p. 202), John was killed by Stotzas ; according to Corippus, by the standard-bearer of Stotzas.

and sixty thousand men who drew the sword, besides women and children, had been annihilated; the number of natives who had fallen in the truceless and merciless war was far larger, and to these must be added the Romans and Byzantines who had been slain in the savage reprisals of a desperate foe.

When Procopius landed near Tripoli with Belisarius, and marched with him through Byzacene to Carthage, he spoke with admiration of the populous cities, the teeming countryside, the commerce, the industries, of which he saw proofs on all sides. In twenty years the whole of that busy scene had been reduced to silent solitude. The numbers who fell have been estimated at five millions, and neither Gibbon nor any other historian has seen reason to consider this an exaggeration. For a hundred years longer the Greek Emperors maintained a nominal empire over an Africa which had shrunk until it included little more than Carthage, a few cities, and a fringe of territory near the sea. Then the flood of Arab invasion burst in, and the sun of the mighty dynasty of Rome in Africa set for ever.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The occupation of North Africa by the Byzantines was not effective except in the east. In the west, in South Algeria and Morocco, strong Berber states seem to have sprung up. The immense Djedar, or Tombs, near Tiaret (one is 150 ft. high) testify to a stable rule and a considerable advance in both civilisation and prosperity.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A BYZANTINE FORTRESS

#### TEBESSA

VERY wonderful are the Roman ruins, the *cadavera oppidum*, which lie scattered broadcast over Tunisia, and, in a lesser degree, Algeria also. But they are the result of a settled occupation extending over a period of some two or three hundred years. Even more extraordinary are the numberless fortresses which the Byzantines erected in little more than one-tenth of that time.

The Vandals had destroyed the defences of the cities, and this ruin it was that the Byzantines set themselves to remedy. To rebuild the walls in the time at their disposal was manifestly impossible; equally impossible was it to leave the cities defenceless; for no place was safe from attack unless it was able to resist it. To be even moderately secure from continual forays, the whole country had to be studded with fortresses; and this was done. It is hard to find the remains of any considerable town or village without its Byzantine fortress. Many of these strongholds exist still; a few are to-day in use for their original purposes. The Arab towns of Tebessa and Mila, and the French camps at Guelma and Setif, are still sheltered by the old Greek walls. Strong, stern, and business-like, hardly injured by their life of fifteen centuries, they give an exalted opinion of the military skill of their architects and of the thoroughness of their work.

Where it was possible, existing buildings were utilised and adapted to their new uses. At Sufetula (Sbeitla) the vast enceinte of the Capitol was made the nucleus of the defences of the city; little was needed here except to block up the openings in the walls, and make embrasures. Other buildings in the neighbourhood of the great temple were turned into subsidiary redoubts. In the same way the smaller Capitol at Dougga became the keep of an enceinte which shut in the town. At Tebessa a large part<sup>1</sup> of the city was re-walled, and a great monastery close by was converted into a cavalry barrack. At Ammoedara (Haidra), in addition to a very important fortress, a splendid triumphal arch was enclosed with walls and made a detached keep. Elsewhere, as at Thubursicum Bure (Teboursouk), although the fortress was new, two triumphal arches were incorporated in the walls.

For the most part, the buildings were very much on the same plan: a quadrangle, more or less extended and regular, with lofty towers at the angles, projecting outwards, not inwards, as with the Roman work at Lambæsis (Lambessa). Other towers protected the walls at intervals, and flanked the gates; the walls were thick enough to allow of a pathway protected by battlements, and approached by staircases leaning against the wall, being carried along the top. The interior was occupied with the various buildings needed by the soldiers, especially a church, without which no Byzantine fortress was complete.

One other thing they all have in common: they were built of old materials. The Byzantines had neither time nor money to quarry new. Nor was it necessary. The stones were there ready to be used.

<sup>1</sup> Probably about one-third.

There was no need to imitate the Barberini, worse than the Barbari, and many another Roman Pope or noble, and destroy temple or colosseum in order to steal the stones or marbles. The old Pagan temples were in ruins, the Donatists had wrecked the Christian churches, the Vandals had pulled down the city walls—all the necessary materials were there, ready at hand.

The most perfect detached fortress, for the defence of an unwallled city, is that at Ammœdara (Haidra). It stands on the southern slope of a steep hill, and rests upon the bank of a perennial stream, the Oued Haidra. The river was crossed by a bridge of a single arch of a hundred feet span. The river wall was restored in the nineteenth century. The form of the fortress was a very irregular quadrangle of about one hundred and twenty yards by two hundred and twenty. The wall was strengthened with ten towers, all square except one, which was round. There were several gates: the most important, namely, the great entrance from the north, and the water-gate to the south, were protected with towers; others were mere unprotected posterns. As usual, a pathway ran along the whole circuit of the walls, as at Chester. Against the western wall stood the church; it consisted of a nave and aisles. The porch was flanked by a lofty tower. A large space on the north-east corner, the only angle where there was no tower, was partly, if not entirely, roofed in, and served as the Pretorium or Forum or market—possibly as all three.

The fortress which defended Timgad, though not so large, is almost equally perfect, and much more accessible.

More important and perfect still, a testimony

to its strategical value, is the walled city of Theveste (Tebessa) on the southern slope of the Aures. It was the first place fortified by the Third Legion, to protect the line of communication between the Hodra and the sea. Rebuilt in A.D. 535 by the eunuch Solomon, it is still strongly garrisoned by the French. On this point all the great roads converge, from Lambæsis and Mascula (Khenchela) to the west, from the desert to the south, from Haidra and Central Tunisia to the east, from Carthage and Cirta through Thagaste (South Ahras) and Madauros (Mdaourouch) to the north.

From the very first, even after the headquarters of the Legion had been moved to Lambæsis, its importance has remained but little impaired. Standing at a height of 3000 feet above the sea on the gentle slopes of the still wooded mountains of the Aures, it commands a vast upland plain, once of great fertility, which stretches in a great semicircle to the north-east and north-west. To-day its chief exports are halfa (esparto grass) and phosphates, immense deposits of which have been discovered in the hills between it and Haidra.

The journey by the light railway which runs from Thagaste (South Ahras) to Tebessa is interesting and, in parts, beautiful. For the first few miles the little train winds on and up through the gorge of the Medjerba, between lofty rocks clothed with oaks, elms, and cork trees, with occasional grassy hollows, a pleasant change from the arid, treeless wastes to which the traveller is accustomed. A run, or saunter, of twenty miles brings us to Mdaourouch, and the open plain begins. To the left, at a distance of about three miles, lie the important ruins of Madauros, the birthplace of the satirist Apuleius; a beautiful

Roman mausoleum, the remains of vast thermæ, and of a great Byzantine fortress, still mark the spot. Here the river dwindles to a rivulet, and the rivulet to a trickle, and at last vanishes. We have reached the watershed, and soon another trickle tells us that we are by the source of the Mellegue. Then the line, after passing the considerable ruins of another town, not yet identified, runs round the base of some strange splintered mountain crags which rise abruptly from the plain. The summit of one of them is pierced by a curious circular hole, like that at Torghatten, in Norway.

At last, at the foot of the wooded range of the Aures, Tebessa comes in sight, lonely and forsaken in its great circle of walls, like the desolate little town of Aigues Mortes from which St. Louis sailed on his last crusade, to die at Tunis.

The town itself is a shabby little place, but its monuments are of profound interest. Chief amongst them are the great encircling walls which Solomon erected for its defence. The part enclosed, like Timgad, which is of almost the same size, is nearly a square, three hundred and sixty yards by three hundred and ten. The walls, which average thirty to thirty-three feet in height and seven feet in thickness, are strengthened by fourteen towers of an average height of fifty-five to sixty feet; the protected footway which runs along the top is reached, as usual, by staircases built against the wall. The south wall has, in part, been built upon the *scena* of the theatre. The *pulpitum* still remains almost uninjured; upon it are heaped huge drums of the marble columns.

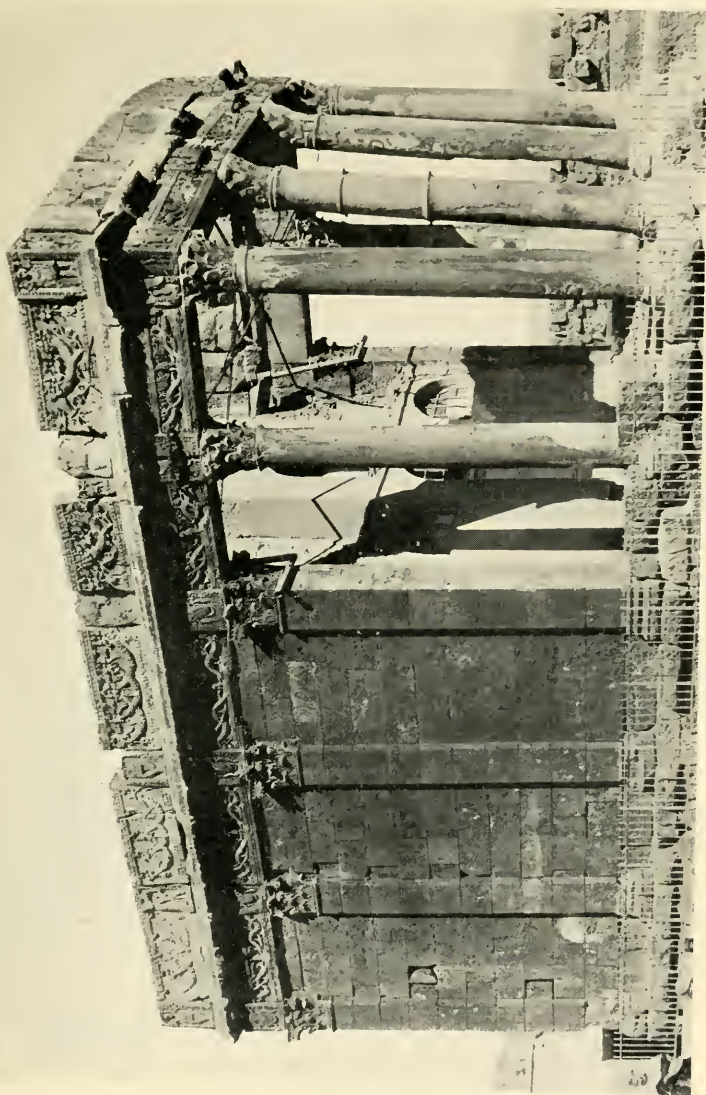
There are three gates. That in the north wall, known as the Old Gate, the Bab-el-Khedima, is

formed by the splendid arch of Caracalla. Over our heads as we pass through it into the town is an inscription which relates how Solomon, "the most glorious and very excellent Master of the Soldiers, Præfect of Libya and Patrician," built the wall and fortified the city. He was himself killed in battle in the neighbourhood. Another inscription in the interior of the arch records that it was erected in accordance with the will of Cornelius Egrilianus, at a cost of two hundred and fifty thousand sesterces (£2680). In the east wall a curiously narrow machicolated gateway, flanked by two boldly projecting towers, bears the name of Solomon. To the west the Constantine Gate led to the circus. The main thoroughfare lay between these gates. The south wall has no opening. It has been calculated that the work of erecting the wall and towers would occupy eight hundred men for two years.

There is no trace of any fosse or moat. Evidently the builders considered that such walls were a sufficient defence against any attack that the wild tribes might be able to make upon the town.

Just inside the walls, and close to the Old Gate, is the Temple of Minerva—so called. The Naos, resting on a lofty *podium*, and approached by a flight of twenty steps, is very perfect. In date and beauty it lies between the austere little Temple of Fortuna Virilis at Rome and the lovely *Maison Carrée* at Nîmes, to which it is frequently compared. In style it is tetrastyle pseudo-pteripteral stylobate; that is, it rests upon a platform, and has four pillars in front, which are not continued round the *cella* except as engaged pilasters. Round the Naos runs an architrave, divided into square panels and decorated with ox-heads and eagles with outstretched

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TEMPLE AT TEBESSA



wings holding serpents in their claws. The attic is somewhat heavily carved with garlands, cornucopias, trophies, masks, images of gods, Victories, and so on. The pediment and roof, if they ever existed, have perished. The building has been put to strange uses. In turns a soap manufactory, an office of the engineers, a tribunal for the Moslems (now installed in the neighbouring buildings), a canteen, a military club, and a church, it is now a museum.

Leaving the town by the Old Gate, a long, straight, dusty road, lined with trees, seems to stretch out into infinity. Following it for some six hundred yards, we come to the ruins of the great monastery, the most important ecclesiastical monument in North Africa. The day was hot and the sky cloudless. The natives whom we met coming into the town with their laden donkeys, or passed sitting in the sun at the door of their gourbis, regarded us with the solemn, silent scrutiny which is all they commonly vouchsafe to infidels, unless there is money to be made. Happily for us, they were too lazy or too distrustful of their French, to press their services upon us as guides, and so, in a peace which was as delightful as it was unusual, we reached the vast mass of grey ruins which we had come so far to see.<sup>1</sup>

It lay to the left of the road, surrounded by a desolate plain stretching to the desolate mountains, itself more desolate even than they.

What must have been once a grand monumental gateway opens upon a broad terrace about sixty

<sup>1</sup> After careful examination of the ruins, the account given in the text seems to be the most satisfactory. Some writers, however, are of opinion that the "Cloister" was a market, the four "squares" pens for cattle, and the "Refectory" always and only a stable.

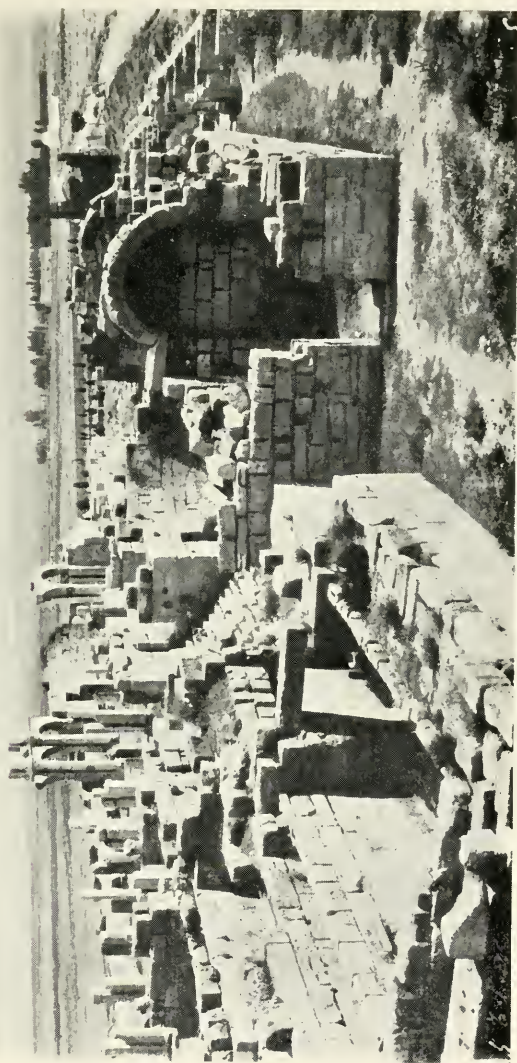
yards long ; to the left lies the cloister, to the right the church. The terrace is closed by a second gateway ; passing through this, we find to our left the refectory, to our right the other monastic buildings. The whole was enclosed by a wall, strengthened by seven towers, projecting inwards. Against the wall, as well as against the church, were built the cells of the monks.

The cloister ran round three sides of a square, at a height of about six feet above the ground ; along the fourth side ran the terrace and the façade of the church. The garth, as we should call it in England, was divided into four by two paths which intersected in the middle. It appears that these four squares were basins which could be flooded, at any rate during the great heats of the summer.

On the other side of the terrace, a flight of fourteen steps led up to the pillared portico of the great church. Through this we pass into the atrium, surrounded by a colonnade. In the centre was a quatrefoil fountain with pillars supporting a dome. To the right a doorway leads into the baptistery. Elsewhere, especially at Timgad, the baptistery forms a very important and beautiful feature of the church. Here it has been reduced, by exigencies of space, to little more than a passage, with a tiny circular font not more than five feet in diameter.

From the atrium three gateways open into the church, which is of grand proportions. The nave is separated from its aisles by an arcade of ten arches resting upon square piers in front of which were marble columns. Above this a similar arcade opened upon a gallery, as at St. Agnese at Rome. Above this rose the clerestory.

The last three bays of the nave, enclosed by a



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cancellus, or screen, formed the sanctuary, in the middle of which, resting on a step or platform which still remains, stood the altar, probably of wood. Beyond the nave, two lateral flights of three steps led to the semicircular apse or presbytery. Round this were ranged the seats for the chapter, with the throne for the bishop in the centre. It is the usual basilican arrangement, similar to that at Torcello, so nobly pictured by Ruskin in his *Stones of Venice*. Other even more familiar examples are to be found in St. Ambrogio at Milan or St. Clemente at Rome.

The mosaic floor of the church, though, now, terribly damaged, must have been of very great beauty, and if, as M. Alb. Ballu believes, the walls and vaulting were also enriched with marble panelling and mosaics, the effect must have been extremely rich.

On the right-hand side, on entering the church, a broad flight of twelve steps led down into a beautiful trefoiled chapel or trichorum similar to that in the Damous-el-Karita at Carthage. Many tombs have been found in it, some below, others several feet above, the original mosaic floor of the chapel. One of these, a fine sarcophagus of marble, now forms the high altar of the modern church; another, as the inscription tells us, was the tomb of Bishop Palladius, who died A.D. 488. As at Carthage, the name of the saint to whom this beautiful chapel was dedicated is unknown. Doubtless he was buried in the centre, beneath the altar.

To the right a large room or sacristy runs parallel to the atrium, leaving, as already said, a very narrow space between the two for the baptistery.

All these buildings belong to the fourth century. At the close of that century, Augustine, who had become acquainted with the monastic life at Milan,

built a little cell for himself and his friends Alypius and Evodius on an estate of his own at Thagaste (Souk Ahras). Afterwards he founded the first monastery in Africa at Hippo; and at about the same time—that is, early in the fifth century—monastic buildings began to gather round the basilica at Theveste. Cells for the monks were built against the walls of the church, as in the Temple of Solomon, and then was built also the great hall or refectory which ran by the side of the cloister.

If, on entering the monastery through the great gateway, instead of turning to the left into the cloister, or to the right into the church, we pass on through the second gateway beyond, we find on our left a vast and very splendid hall extending the whole length of the cloister—that is, about one hundred and eighty feet. Two rows of arches resting on square piers divided it into three equal aisles. From each of the sides, ten walls ran out to a distance of six feet, thus dividing this part of the hall into cubicles or cells. All this suggests that the building was a refectory or library or conversorium—perhaps all three.

Down the middle of each of the side aisles runs a low wall about three feet high, divided into partitions of about three feet by upright stones of the same height: these were kept in their places by a course of stones resting upon the top, and stretching from one to the other. The space between these uprights is hollowed out into a trough or manger; and through the edge of the uprights, sometimes through the mangers also, holes have been pierced, worn smooth on the inside by the friction of the ropes or halters. There are eighty of these stalls; forty on each side.

That these are stalls for horses is clear: a precisely similar arrangement is to be found in a house at Timgad. But it is hard to believe that the hall was built as a stable. If it was not, when and by whom were the alterations made? Everything seems to support the view that it was the work of the Byzantines. Tebessa, like Timgad, was a stronghold of the Donatists, and when Solomon came in A.D. 535, he doubtless found the monastery deserted and in ruins. As he rebuilt the walls of the town, and made it once more a fortress, so he turned the ruined monastery into a cavalry barrack. The basilica he respected, and, as it was too ruinous to use, and too large to restore, he erected a small church by the side of the trefoiled chapel. The refectory he utilised as a stable, the cells of the monks as barracks for his soldiers.

Although not so neglected and unknown as some other places we visited, Tebessa lies well off the beaten track of the ordinary tourist. The garrison, consisting of native soldiers, brings a certain number of French officers and a larger number of French merchants; moreover, the trade in phosphates and halfa is in French hands; but, beyond those who are brought by business, there are few foreigners, save a devoted band of English lady missionaries, who occupy a pretty little house outside the walls. They are working wisely as well as zealously, chiefly, but by no means only, amongst the women and children, French as well as native. They are on good terms with the Roman priest, as well as with the Mohammedan authorities, who seem glad that their gentle, civilising influence should penetrate into their homes, even though it comes from Rouama, or Christians.

## CHAPTER XIV

RASSOUL ALLAH, A.D. 622-1453

It is said that Schiller once thought of taking Mohammed as the subject of a tragedy, treating him, as Browning did Paracelsus, and George Eliot Savonarola, as a man who began with an honest enthusiasm and faith in himself and in his mission, but was driven on, step by step, by the force of circumstances and the pressure of unwise followers, into extremes which he never contemplated, and which make it hard to decide whether he deceived others only or himself also.

In any case, it is clear that the idea of a universal religion, and of a world evangelised by fire and sword, was never dreamt of by Mohammed. He began simply as a reformer. There was nothing new about him, except his enthusiasm for the old. His heart was stirred when he saw his people given up to idolatry. His rejection at Mecca embittered him, and the weapons used against him, to drive him out, were the only ones by which he could secure his return. Far from receiving the new evangel with enthusiasm, the Arabs yielded reluctantly, and under compulsion, and, on the death of the Prophet in A.D. 632, rose at once in revolt against his successor.

Mohammed left no son, and the people of Medina elected Abou Bekr, father of his favourite wife, Ayishah, to fill the vacant post, under the title of Khalifah or Successor. To combat the rebellious tribes, Abou Bekr formed his followers into a regular

army, and crushed the insurrection. Realising that the simplest and surest way of ensuring the supremacy of Islam was to employ the wild, unruly warriors elsewhere, he launched them upon the decaying empires of Constantinople and Persia, "torn to pieces by war, enervated by luxury, and gangrened with corruption." The congenial employment of fighting, and the prospect of booty in this world and paradise in the next, repaid the Arabs for their submission to the Law and Prophet of Mecca.

On August 22, A.D. 634, the day of the fall of Damascus, Abou Bekr died. Omar ibn al Khattab, father of the Prophet's third wife, Hafsa, succeeded him. He was the first to offer prayers openly at the Kaaba, and to collect the Prophet's scattered writings into the Koran. His declaration of policy on his election deserves to be repeated. "By God, he that is weakest among you shall be in my sight the strongest until I have vindicated for him his rights, but him that is strongest will I treat as weakest until he complies with the laws." To him was due the great spread of Islamism. His generals drove the Greeks out of Syria and Phœnicia, and by the conquest of al-Iragan, completed the overthrow of the Empire of Persia. At the same time Amr ibn al Asi conquered Egypt, with the aid of the Coptic Christians, and signalled his victory by the destruction of the priceless library at Alexandria. "If these books contradict the Koran, they are false; if they agree with it, they are useless." The argument was unanswerable, and the books were burnt.

Omar was murdered in A.H. 23 (A.D. 644). His dying words are his best epitaph: "It had gone hard with my soul if I had not been a Moslem."

Masters of Egypt, with an appetite which grew

by eating, the wild hordes pressed on triumphantly to the Maghreb with a zeal in which religion had but little place. Their forays were conducted with the savagery which came naturally to them, but there was none of that fanatical hatred of Christianity which the bigotry of the Turks has taught us to associate with Islamism; each tribe they attacked was perfectly free to resist, or to adopt Islamism, or to pay tribute.

The Berbers, as they now began to be called, had never been remarkable for the strength of their religious convictions, though they occasionally showed themselves capable of an exalted enthusiasm for some congenial heresy or schism. Perhaps it would be more true to say that they were willing to adopt any religion outwardly, as long as, under its shield, they were able to preserve the traditional faith, and, in part at least, the traditional rites of their forefathers. The religion of Rome had been easily absorbed. Hammon became Saturn, and Tanith Coelestis. Then had come Christianity with its alluring doctrine that within the fold there was to be "neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," and its supreme attraction that it was considered to represent disloyalty to the Emperor. But the quiet sobriety of the Catholic faith had never possessed such charms for them as the violent extremes of Montanism, and the wild extravagances of Donatism and of the Circumcelliones. Then had appeared the Vandals, and their easy Arianism was a welcome change from what had become the official religion of their Roman masters. Finally the Byzantine invaders had brought back orthodoxy and striven to enforce it with most unwise severity.

Paganism, Catholicism, Montanism, Donatism,

Arianism, Orthodoxy—each in turn had been taught as final and complete truth. What wonder if, bewildered and perplexed, the Berbers bowed to each just so far as necessary, and clung quietly and faithfully to their old beliefs—as they cling still.

In the seventh century, the Arianism of the Vandals, on the whole, held the ground, and between this and Islam the differences were not vital. Both agreed in the first half of the great confession of faith: "La ilaha ill Allah," "There is no God, or Divinity, but God." The second half was of secondary importance: "Mohammed Rassoul Allah," "Mohammed is the prophet or apostle of God." With regard to the first half, the way was made very easy. In the Koran composed by the King-Prophet, Çalih' ben T'arif, for the use of the Borghouata Berbers, the name of God appears, not as Allah, but as Iakouch, or Bakouch. Thus, "In the name of Allah," appears as "Bism en Iakouch," and the great formula, "Allah Akbar," "God is great," is rendered "Mok'k'ah Iakouch," and so on. And this continued until the destruction of the tribe in the eleventh century.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this all. Islamism practised the great doctrine of the equality of all men within the fold, which Christianity had contented itself with teaching. Every Moslem was a free man, could hold property, and was exempt from taxation. Race privileges, class distinctions, alien landlordism, government by foreigners, imperial taxation, all were swept away; while unlimited booty and glory were offered freely

<sup>1</sup> The origin of this name is obscure, but it is safe to say that it is neither Moslem, Christian, nor Jewish, but belongs to some older and native religion. On the subject of the possible identification of Iakouch with the Libyan cavalier god and the Greek Iacchus, *vide* Part II., Chapter II., and the references given there.

to all who, under the Prophet's banner, would march to the pillage of Europe.

Still, the resistance of the Berbers to the Arab invasion was desperate and prolonged, and we are told that "they apostatised twelve times." Even now the Mohammedanism of the mountaineers of the Aures and Djurdjura is of a very free and unorthodox type, and they have always dealt with the civil regulations of the Koran exactly as they have chosen.

On the murder of Omar, Othman ibn Affan, the husband of two of the Prophet's daughters, was elected Khalifah, against the vehement protest of Ali, the Prophet's adopted son, and the husband of his daughter Fatimah, one of the four perfect women, and the only one through whom the direct descent from the Prophet was maintained. But Othman had been elected by the six emigrants appointed for the purpose by Omar, and all opposition was in vain ; but the dissensions between the two led eventually to the division of Islam into the two great sects of "Sunnis," or "Those of the Path," and "Shi'ahs," or "Followers" of Ali.

In the year of Othman's succession, A.D. 644, Amr ibn el Asi seized Tripoli. Three years later, A.D. 647, under the command of Abd Allah ibn ez Zobeir, the Arab host poured into Ifrikyia, through the south of Tunisia. The Prefect Gregory, or Djoredjir, as the Arabs called him—much as the Spaniards called Hawkins Achines, or Drake Draco—had declared his independence of Constantinople, and assumed the purple.<sup>1</sup>

The battle which practically ended the Byzantine

<sup>1</sup> At least so we may assume, since the historian Theophanes gives him the title of "Turannos."

rule was fought near Sufetula (Sbeitla); Gregory was completely defeated and killed, and Sbeitla was taken and sacked. "The daughter of Djoredjir had accompanied him, and was amongst the prisoners: she fell to the lot of a man of Medina. 'For the future,' said he; as he lifted her on a camel, 'you will have to walk a-foot, and wait on other women.' 'What is the dog saying?' she asked. When she was told; she threw herself from the camel and was killed."<sup>1</sup> The natives took no part in the battle, but stood beholding.

The surrounding towns purchased immunity with a heavy ransom: no surer way could have been devised of inviting fresh inroads than this of proclaiming that they were rich enough to pay, but too cowardly to fight. However, for the moment it succeeded, Abd Allah retired with his booty, and the land had peace for thirty years. The causes of this interval of rest are not far to seek.

Things were not going well at headquarters. In a religion which has done almost as much to degrade women as Christianity has done to raise them, it is interesting to note that the cause of the trouble seems to have been the intrigues of a woman.

In his old age Mohammed had fallen completely under the influence of his favourite wife, Ayishah, daughter of Abou Bekr, whom he had married when she was only nine years old. An "*injusta noverca*," with a childless woman's unreasoning jealousy of the more fortunate Fatimah, she seems to have set herself at every turn to exclude Ali and his sons Hassan and Husein from the Khalifate.

<sup>1</sup> The sentences printed in inverted commas in this chapter are, for the most part, condensed from the summaries of the chronicles given by Victor Piquet in his *Civilisations de l'Afrique du Nord*.

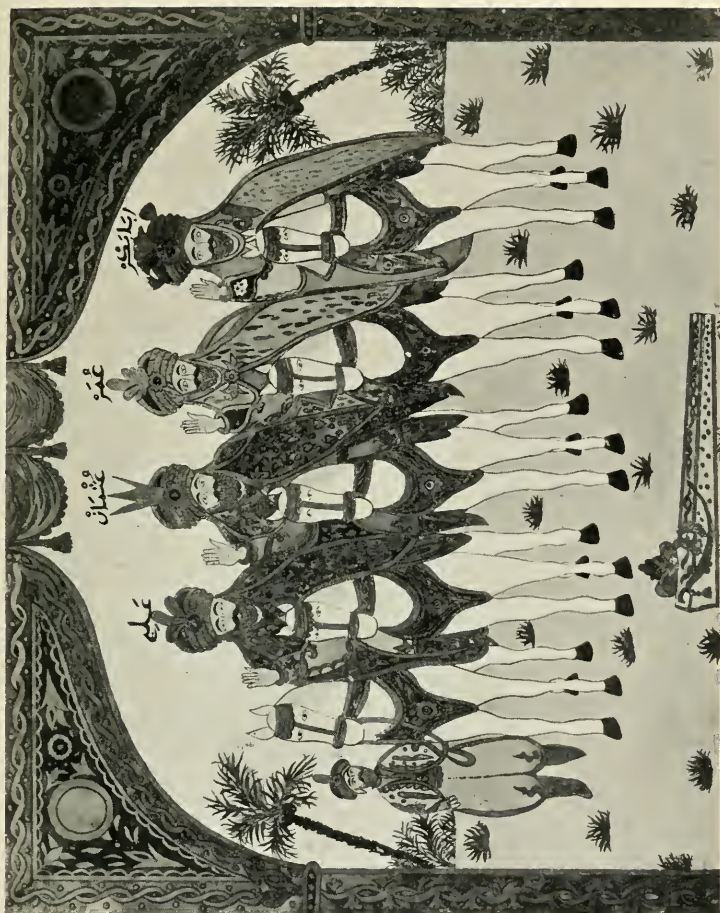
Hitherto she had succeeded, but when, in due course, A.D. 655, Othman also was murdered by her own brother Mohammed, Ali became the obvious, if not the only, candidate, and was duly elected at Medina. In furious anger Ayishah fled to Damascus, taking with her the blood-stained cloak of Othman, to which she fastened the fingers of his wife, the daughter of the Prophet, who had been murdered with him. Boldly, and not without some reason, accusing Ali of, at least, complicity in the double murder, she stirred up the Governor of Damascus, Othman ben Mu'awiyah, of the family of Omaiyah, to revolt and proclaim himself Khalifah. Othman needed little pressing. After some inconclusive arbitration, war was declared, and Ali was defeated and murdered, A.D. 661. His son Hassan, elected as his successor, had the wisdom to decline the dangerous honour, and retired to Medina.<sup>1</sup> This, however, did not save him from being also murdered by Yazed, son of Mu'awiyah ; as was also his brother Husein.

In twenty-eight years four out of five Khalifahs had been murdered, the authentic line of Perfect Khalifahs was extinguished, and the direct line of descent from the Prophet cut short. Damascus became the capital instead of Mecca, and Mu'awiyah founded there the hereditary dynasty of the Omeiades. His followers adopted and practically usurped the name of Sunnites, leaving to the followers of Ali the name of Shi'ahs. It has been computed that now the Sunnites number one hundred and forty-five millions, and the Shi'ahs fifteen.

From this period date some of the main trunk schisms of Islam :—

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<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason that, in the picture of the Perfect Khalifahs, Hassan is represented on foot, and with no title of "Sidi" like the rest.



THE FOUR PERFECT KHALIFAHS AT THE TOMB OF THE PROPHET



The SUNNITES, "They of the Path," or Orthodox, a name identified with the Omeiades. They took their name from Othman ibn Affan, of the family of Beni Omeia: it was to this family that the Khalifahs of Damascus belonged.

SHI'AHs, or "Followers," of Ali. These rejected all Imans (they do not use the word Khalifah) except the direct descendants of Mohammed through Ali and Fatimah.

They acknowledged twelve Imans. The last, Mohammed, son of Al Hasan al Askari, disappeared mysteriously down a well in the courtyard of a house at Hillah near Baghdad, whence he will return again to be the Mahdi or Guide, who, as the Prophet foretold, will appear before the Day of Judgment.

KHAREDJITES, or Dissenters. These were the soldiers of Ali who deserted him when he submitted his claim to arbitration. They recognised only the first three Khalifahs. The Berbers adopted this form of schism in a body.

OUAHBITES, a name of the Kharedjites, from the chief Abd Allah ben Ouahb.

These were divided into two other sects—

IBADITES, from their founder, Abd Allah ben Ibad; and

SOFRITES, from their founder, Abd Allah ben Sofar.

Other sects will emerge as we go on. Amongst the seventy-three sects of Islam, thirty-two are assigned to the Shi'ahs.

Now that these domestic differences had been adjusted, the attack on North Africa began again. In A.D. 678 (A.H. 46), Okba ibn Nafi, the fiercest of all Moslem fighters, was launched against the Byzacene. "Marching against the country of the

Ouezzan, Okba cut off an ear of their chief, saying to him, 'It is a reminder ; when you put your hand to your ear you will remember that it is not well to fight against Arabs.' Then Okba overran the Fezzan, and reached the country of the Harouar ; he cut off a finger of their chief, as a reminder, and imposed a tribute of 360 slaves." Stopped in his advance to the west by the sand, "he returned to the country of the Harouar, whom he found sleeping in their underground dwellings. He cut the throats of all the men of war, seized their children and riches, and went his way."

Another swarm of Arabs under the command of Maouia ben Hadaïdj advanced north, and attacked Djohera (Hadrumentum or Sousse). "The Emperor of the East sent thirty thousand soldiers to defend the country : they landed at Djohera. Maouia marched against the place, and, when he arrived in sight of the ramparts, alighted from his horse, and offered certain prayers before his troops. The Byzantines were at first filled with astonishment, then they advanced against the Moslems. Maouia was still prostrate on the ground when the first infidels approached ; then he mounted his horse and charged the enemy, whom he cut to pieces. The soldiers of Byzantium then re-embarked."

Okba was invested by the Khalifah with the government of the new province ; he conquered Byzacene, and founded Kairouan on the spot where Sidi Sahab, one of the "Associates" of the Prophet, had been buried ; thus for the first time the Arabs had a settlement in the new country.

But as yet their foothold was very insecure. The Byzantines were conquered, and the Berbers had, as usual, watched the conflict with a benevolent

aloofness and unconcern. Now their turn was coming, and they at once prepared for a desperate resistance. Okba had been recalled by the Khalifah and replaced by one of his rivals, El Mohadjer, who began his work by destroying Okba's resting-place or Caravan. In A.D. 680, Okba was reinstated by Yezid, son of Mu'awiyah, returned, rebuilt Kairouan, and started on a wild marauding foray to the west; dragging with him El Mohadjer in chains. Against the fortified towns, Tabessa, Timgad, and the rest, his fury was spent in vain, but he fell upon the great tribe of the Aoureba and exterminated it, and carried away captive in his train the King, Koceila. Contrary to the advice of El Mohadjer, he treated him with characteristic insolence. One day he set him to kill a sheep. Seeing him wipe his bloody hand on his beard, he demanded what he meant. "Nothing," was the answer; "it is good for the hair." At last, "arriving on the shore of the ocean, he raised the standard of the Prophet, and, making it follow the course of the sun from its rising to its setting, he dashed into the waves up to his horse's chest, crying, 'God of Mohammed, if I were not stopped by the waves of this sea, I would go even to the most distant land, to bear the glory of Thy Name, to fight for Thy religion, and to destroy all who will not believe on Thee.'"

Then he turned, to fight his way back again as best he might. He reached the Hodna in safety. There he divided his forces. The main body, with the booty, he sent forward by the road which ran through the still fertile plains to the north of the Aures. He himself, with three hundred men, followed the track through the Ziban and the oases which fringe the southern slopes of the mountains. Koceila seized the opportunity, made his escape, and raised the

country—the Greek inhabitants of the towns making, for the first time in history, common cause with the natives.

With such forces as he could thus hastily muster, Koceila dashed south, probably through the great gorge of El Kantara, came upon his enemy at Tahouda near Biskra, and overwhelmed him and all his little band. Okba's end was a worthy one. It is said that when he found himself faced by the alternative of flight or death, he struck with his own hands the fetters off the limbs of El Mohadjer, and bade him escape. He refused, and the two rivals, drawing their scimitars and breaking the scabbards, fell side by side. This was in the year A.D. 682. A typical Moslem apostle and saint, he still lies near the spot where he fell, in the mosque of the little town which bears his name, and which his holiness has made ever since a place of pilgrimage only less important than Kairouan itself. His epitaph can still be read. It is written in early Kufic characters, and is probably the oldest Arabic inscription in the world. "This is the tomb of Okba, son of Nafi—may God have mercy on him."

His death marks the recovery of Berber independence. Koceila made himself master of the whole country, and again destroyed Kairouan.

In A.D. 698 Kairouan was rebuilt by the Governor of Egypt. However, he was driven back and killed, and Ifrikyia was once more clear of the Arabs.

It was not until the year A.D. 720 (A.H. 98), that "the Lord strengthened the hands of Hassan, Governor of Egypt," to finally subdue the country. For the fourth time Kairouan was rebuilt, and Hassan marched against Carthage. By a dashing attack, the walls were scaled, and the city taken and sacked ;

on the approach, however, of the Byzantine fleet, under the command of John the Patrician, the Arabs evacuated the city and returned to Kairouan, where they wintered. Next year they received strong reinforcements and advanced again. This time John found himself overmatched. He withdrew to Utica, whence, after sustaining a severe defeat, he re-embarked for Constantinople. This time Hassan made sure of his prey, and for a second time Carthage was levelled to the ground. Tunis was built with its stones and adorned with its marble pillars. Whatever was left above ground was carried away in after years; it is said that the cathedral at Pisa was built with some of the stones. The great harbours were filled up and completely obliterated; until a few years ago their very position was a matter of guess-work and tradition. So ended European rule in North Africa.

But the real work had still to be done. Koceila, the Berber Caractacus, had fallen in battle on the Medjerba, but an African Boadicea arose to take his place. The name of this famous heroine is unknown; she is always described by her titles, Dahiah or Queen, and Kahenah or Priestess.<sup>1</sup> The chronicler, Ibn Khaldoun, tells us that she belonged to the Jewish tribe of Djoraouah, but she was certainly a Berber, though probably her tribe had been converted to Judaism. She was an example of what would now be termed a Marabouta, half prophet like Deborah, half sorceress, she wielded a power which was all the stronger because its foundations were mysterious and rested on the supernatural.

In a battle fought at the foot of the Aures, Hassan was completely routed and driven back upon Gabes.

<sup>1</sup> She is described as daughter of Tabeta, son of Enfale. She was Queen of the Djoraouah, a Zenete tribe of the Aures.

Eighty of his body-guard were taken prisoners ; with one exception the Kahenah sent them back without ransom. The name of the exception was " Khaled, son of Iezid, of the tribe of Cais, and he was young and beautiful. ' I have never seen,' said she to him, ' so goodly a youth as you. I wish to give you suck, that you may become the son of the Kahenah, and the brother of her children.' And this ceremony, which amongst the Berbers constitutes adoption, took place."

Convinced that the Arabs were fighting only for booty, she then laid desolate the whole country between Sfax and El Djem, where she fortified herself in the vast amphitheatre, razed the cities, destroyed the cisterns and barrages, and burnt the forests and groves of olives. At last, A.D. 703, after five years of desolating warfare, she realised that further resistance was impossible. Determined herself to die a queen, she had prepared her sons for submission, and sent them, with Khaled, into the camp of Hassan, before the final battle. Next day she was defeated and killed, and her head was sent to the Khalifah, Abd-el-Melek.<sup>1</sup> " Thus the freedom of Barbary descended into its grave, not to rise again on the third morning, or the third week, or the third year." Whether this prediction was fulfilled remains to be seen.

Her sons passed into the service of Hassan, and when, following in the steps of Tarif, who has given Gibraltar its name, Mousa ibn Noceir passed over into Spain, they marched under his banner, at the head of twelve thousand Berbers, and helped to found the Omeiade kingdoms of Seville and Granada. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> The battle in which the Kahenah was killed, was fought near Mitoussa, between Lambessa and Tebessa. The enemy were guided and commanded by Khaled. According to another account, her head was thrown into a well.

at the expense of Spain, an interval of comparative peace was secured for Africa.

The rule of the four Perfect Khalifahs had been unostentatious and cheap; that of the Omeiades was brilliant and costly, and had to be paid for. Imperial taxes began once more to weigh heavily on Africa, and in A.D. 720 Yezed, the governor, enforced upon the Moslem taxes which, like the Kharadj, or poll tax, were due from infidels only. In the midst of the discontent which this caused, came the Kharedjite missionaries, and were received with enthusiasm. It was sufficient that, as their name implied, they were dissenters, and that, in the eyes of the Berbers, the rejection of the orthodoxy of the rulers at Kairouan, was a sufficient excuse for rebellion against their authority. In addition to this, their doctrines were as acceptable as their schism, for they united the harsh morality of Tertullian with the separatism of the Donatists and the wild extravagances of the Circumcelliones. Revolt began, and soon spread over the whole country. In A.D. 740 it required the whole army of Egypt, and a massacre, in which it is said that one hundred and eighty thousand Berbers fell, to reduce the east to something like submission; in the west, the two principal sects of Kharedjites succeeded in founding independent states, the Ibadites at Tiaret, in the Central Maghreb "el Aouçot," and the Sofrites at Sidgilmassa (Tafilah), in the south of the Western Maghreb "el Acsa."<sup>1</sup>

At last, his patience exhausted by these continual excursions and alarms, the Khalifah of Baghdad,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Maghreb" means "west." Roughly speaking, the Maghreb "el Acsa" corresponds with Morocco, the Maghreb "el Aouçot" with Algeria, and "Ifrikyia" with Tunisia.

<sup>2</sup> Baghdad was founded by the Khalifah Abd er Rahman, and made his capital A.D. 754 (A.H. 136).

Haroun-al-Raschid, gave the whole of the Maghreb as a fief to a chief of Ifrikya, Ibrahim ibn Aghled. Thus was founded the practically independent dynasty of the Aghlebites at Kairouan, which was able to maintain itself for a hundred years (A.D. 800-908), sometimes with splendour, always with success. Charlemagne sent ambassadors to Ibrahim, and they were received at Kairouan with great magnificence, and to his successors the city owes its finest buildings; they kept a standing army and fleet, with which they not only kept the peace in Ifrikya, but were able also to conquer Sicily. In their home policy they made a serious attempt to secure justice for the poor, and to save them from oppression, by appointing in every town an officer whose special duty was to protect the common people from the tyranny of the great.

In the Western Maghreb they were powerless either to subdue the two Kharedjite kingdoms or to prevent the foundation of another at Fez by the Edrissites, a sect of "legitimists," who recognised as Khalifahs only the direct descendants of the Prophet through Edrei, the only son of Ali and Fatimah, so they pretended, who escaped the massacre which, in the ordinary course, followed the murder of Ali himself.

To make confusion worse confounded, there appeared towards the close of the ninth century another disturbing element. The Shi'ahs raised the banner of a new Mahdi, Obeïd Allah; and his lieutenant, Abou Abd Allah, succeeded without much difficulty in converting, or at least raising, the whole of the powerful Ketana tribe, which occupied the country between the Aures and the sea. They were soon joined by the Zouaoua of the Djurdjura

mountains, and the Sanhadja from Southern Tunisia. In A.D. 908, Abou Abd Allah, at the head of a hundred thousand men, marched upon Kairouan and defeated and put to flight Ziadet Allah, the last of the Aghlebites. Once seated on the throne which Abou Abd Allah had won for him, Obeïd Allah soon changed the part of an apostle for that of a despot. He inaugurated his reign by murdering Abou Abd Allah, and then, finding the atmosphere of Kairouan too orthodox, built himself a new capital at Mehdiya, on the site of an old Roman town whose name is uncertain; in Froissart it appears as Africa. His followers were known as Fatemites, to emphasise the supposed descent from Fatimah, and thus was founded a dynasty which lasted from A.D. 909 to 1171.

Turning his arms west, he overthrew the two Kharedjite kingdoms at Sidjilmassa and Tiaret, and received the submission to his suzerainty of the Edrissites of Fez. Then he died, leaving an empire which spread from the Syrtes to the very heart of the Maghreb el Acsa, or Morocco.

The third and last of the Fatemites of Africa proper was Abou Temim Maad el Mançour. Under the name of El Moezz ed-din Allah, "He who exalts the religion of God," he conquered Egypt, and, deserting Africa, established his capital at the new city El Kahira, the Victorious (Cairo), which he had founded, and where the Khotbah, or solemn state prayer offered on Friday for the Commander of the Faithful, was said in the mosques in his name, A.D. 969.

But the ascendancy of the Katama tribe had not remained unchallenged. The tribe of the Zenetes, who occupied the whole desert fringe of North Africa

from Tripoli to the meridian of Algiers, had remained faithful to the old Kharedjite heresy. Under the leadership of a Sofrite, Abou Yezed, known as the Man with the Ass, they overran Ifrikyā, sacked Kairouan, and laid siege to Mehdiā; it was by his victory over them that Abou Temin Maad won his title of "El Mançour," "The Victorious." Foiled in the east, they turned their arms towards the west, and one of their chieftains, Ziri ibn Atia, made himself master of Fez and Sidjilmassa, and established a kingdom there. The rest of North Africa remained faithful to the Shi'ahs. It was divided into two kingdoms, one of the East, the other of Central Africa, with its capital at Bone—all purely Berber.

At the close of the tenth century El Mançour gave the command of the west to his brother Hammad, who founded an important city, El Kalaa, the Citadel, in the Hodna. It became very prosperous in the eleventh century, and perished in the twelfth; its ruins, indistinct, but covering a vast space of ground on the south flank of the Djebel Tagarboust,<sup>1</sup> testify to its former grandeur.

On the death of El Mançour, Hammad repudiated the authority of the Fatemites, came to terms with the Abbaside Khalifahs of the east, and founded a kingdom of the north, which extended from Tunis to Algiers. After his death the two families made peace and reigned each in his respective capital.

Thus ended the tenth century.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, it would seem that the Arab invasion had been rolled back, and had left comparatively few traces behind it. In place of a vague monotheistic Christianity the natives professed a vague monotheistic Islamism.

<sup>1</sup> Between Bordj bou Areridj and the Chott-el-Hodna.

Practically they went their own way, accepting whatever appealed to them, so long as it was not the hated orthodoxy of the Omeiades. The whole country was for the first time since the Romans came, perhaps ever since Carthage was founded, essentially Berber, with all the blessings and disadvantages of Home Rule. We have now to see how the Berbers used the freedom they had won; to tell of the new flood of Arabs which overflowed the land, not as conquerors, but as settlers; to trace the rise and fall of the great Berber kingdoms of the Middle Ages, wearing themselves and one another out with ceaseless wars, until the Turks came and destroyed them all. The whole skein is tangled and confused, and it is difficult indeed to be coherent and intelligible without being either diffuse or incomplete.

The course of history now takes us far to the east. In the Hedjaz, a desert tract of Arabia, dwelt two wild marauding nomad tribes, known as the Beni Hillal and the Beni Soleim, who lived by pillaging the neighbouring districts of Mecca and Medina. Unable to reduce them to order, the Khalifah of Baghdad expelled them altogether and drove them bodily into Egypt. Experiencing the same difficulties, the Fatemite Khalifah of Cairo drove them into Upper Egypt.

Then came the final rupture with Africa and El Moezz ibn Badis, who ruled in Kairouan. Exasperated at an outrage, which he was unable himself to punish, the Vizier of the Khalifah, El Mostancer, sent for the chiefs of the Beni Hillal, and said: "I make you a present of the Maghreb, the kingdom of El Moezz ibn Badis the Sanhadjite, a slave who had rejected the authority of his master.

For the future you will want for nothing." The Arabs started west, a mixed multitude of men, women, and children; nomad brigands gathered round them as they went; at last a mob, two hundred thousand strong, of whom forty-five thousand were warriors, poured into Africa. They advanced like a swarm of locusts; "the land was as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." At Gabes, El Moezz met them, and tried in vain to bar the way. Sweeping him before them, the invaders pressed on. Kairouan was taken and sacked, and they poured into the Maghreb. They were not conquerors, be it remembered, but a swarm of miserable hungry creatures, who had been driven from one desert to another; they took what they could get and squatted where they could. Leaving the mountainous districts untouched, they mixed with and degraded the prosperous dwellers on the plains, devastating the lands and destroying the cities wherever they went; and thus Africa, which Roman skill and perseverance had made one of the great granaries of the world, went once more out of tillage, and fell back into prairie and desert. For the first time North Africa could with some truth be called Arab, a "Garden of Allah"—that is, a desert.

From the north came a new trouble for the distracted Berbers. In the year A.D. 1101 died Roger d'Hauteville, the Norman King of Sicily, brother of Robert Guiscard. In A.D. 1143 his son, Roger II., descended upon Djidjelli and destroyed it. In A.D. 1146 he seized Tripoli. It was a time of terrible distress and famine in East Africa—the legacy of the Arabs. "Many left the country to take refuge in Sicily; a multitude of unfortunates died of famine; others were driven to eat human flesh."

The opportunity was not to be lost. Roger sailed for Mehdia, which the Khalifah evacuated, retiring to Bougie; Sousse was taken without resistance, Sfax was carried by assault, and "soon the infidels were masters of all the country from Tripoli to Tunis, and from the sea to Kairouan."

We have travelled from east to north, from the Hallal of Arabia to the Normans of France. Now we have to travel south. At the sources of the Niger, or, as they thought, of the Nile, dwelt certain tribes of the "Sanhadja of the Veil"<sup>1</sup> (Likam), who have given their name to Senegal. Moslems only in name, they had been converted to Sunnite orthodoxy by one of their chiefs, who had himself been instructed by a learned doctor at Kairouan. Spreading their new faith with and by their arms, they started for the north. They preached an austere doctrine, destroying as they went all instruments of music, and everything which could distract a Moslem from the thought of the salvation of his soul. Pressing on, they seized Tafilet and its capital Sidjilmassa. Then they attacked the Zenetes, then the Mas-mouda of the Upper Atlas (Deren). Descending the mountains, they fell upon the Zenetes of the Tell; lastly, they met the Borghouata of the western littoral, heretics who had a Koran<sup>2</sup> of their own, written in the Berber tongue. These they destroyed, and they vanish from history, A.D. 1059.

Under the command of Youssof ibn Tachefin, the Almoravides (El Morabethin, the Marabouts) pushed north, seized Fez, and massacred the inhabitants. "In the mosques alone he slew three thousand men,"

<sup>1</sup> For some interesting details concerning the Veiled Touaregs, *vide Across the Sahara*, by Hanns Vischer, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> The Koran of Çalih' ben T'arif. Cf. p. 235.

A.D. 1063. Crossing the Straits, he dethroned the Andalusian Emirs, and made himself master of all Moslem Spain, A.D. 1090. After dividing the Maghreb el Acsa into governments which he committed to his chiefs, Youssof, under his new title of Prince of the Faithful, Emir el-Moumenim, attacked the Hammadites in the Central Maghreb. About the year A.D. 1120, the Almoravides reached the zenith of their power, and the Abbassite Khalifahs recognised them as Lords of Spain and of the Maghreb. Then came the end, for few of these kingdoms outlived their founder, or, at any rate, maintained much practical coherence and strength, after the death of the man whose genius and enthusiasm called them into being.

Early in the twelfth century a new sect appeared under a new Mahdi. Ibn Toumert, of the tribe of the Masmouda, was born in the Atlas Mountains. After studying at Cordova, A.D. 1105, he travelled to the east, where, in the centre of fanaticism and blind exaltation, he was trained to be the warrior apostle of the Sofrites. He returned on foot to the west. At Mehdi he was well received; at Bougie his zeal in breaking wine-jars and instruments of music was so little to the liking of the people that he was forced to fly for his life. It was then that he was joined by a young Berber, Abd-el-Moumen, who became his favourite disciple, and in time his successor—perhaps the greatest man the Berber race has ever produced. Ibn Toumert, with his disciple, made his way back to the mountains of the Masmouda. There he declared himself to be the Mahdi, the twelfth Iman predicted by Mohammed. Establishing himself in the mountains of Tini Mellel (the White Wells), in the south of Morocco, he

organised his forces for an onslaught on the Almoravides (A.D. 1112).

His methods, as related by Ibn Khaldoun, had all the simple directness of genius. During a time of famine, certain of his followers were tempted to forsake him and return to their allegiance to the Almoravides. Something had to be done to stop the rot. "God Most High," he proclaimed, "has given me a light by which I may separate the men predestined to paradise from the lost who are doomed to hell; to prove this He has sent certain angels into the wells, who shall bear witness to my truthfulness." So all the people, shedding tears of penitence, came to the wells. "Angels of God," cried the Mahdi, "is this man speaking the truth?" Then certain men whom he had hidden in the wells replied, "Yes, he is speaking truth." Then said Ibn Toumert to the people, "These wells are holy, for the Angels of God have dwelt in them. Let us fill them up quickly, lest they be defiled." So they were filled up, and the Mahdi was relieved from any fear of exposure. Then the Inspired of God placed the lost upon his left hand; the elect upon his right hand; with these he fell upon his enemies, and cast them down a precipice. Thus Ibn Toumert established his power, and rid himself in one day of seven thousand adversaries. A little after this Ibn Toumert died, and Abd-el-Moumen reigned in his stead.

No agitator has ever wanted for followers in Africa. The conquests of Abd-el-Moumen were rapid. The Western Maghreb "el Acsa" was subdued. After a terrible siege of eleven months, during which more than a hundred thousand perished, the capital was taken and the inhabitants put to the sword. "We

may presume that God permitted this because Youssof had treated the King of Seville with indignity after he had dethroned him. Such are the changes of mortal life. Out, then, on the world! and blessed be the Lord, whose kingdom shall never pass away." Thus was founded the "Traditionist," or Almohade kingdom of the west.

At the invitation of the Moslems of the east, Abd-el-Moumen turned his arms towards Ifrikya. All was anarchy there. The Hillal Arabs were supreme in the Central Maghreb, and the Normans held all the seaboard of Ifrikya. In March 1169 El Moumen took Bougie, and put an end to the dynasty of the Hamadites. On July 14 Tunis submitted, and the bishopric of Carthage was suppressed; then Mehdia was besieged and taken, the Normans were expelled, the troublesome Arabs were drafted into the army, and once more, from the Syrtes to the Atlantic, Africa owned a single sway. An amazing conquest, followed by a yet more amazing reform.

Abd-el-Moumen was not merely a fighter—he was a man of grand ideas, and an organiser and administrator of the first rank. He founded universities to which students from Europe had to come to learn the sciences; the whole country was surveyed for fiscal purposes and divided into square miles; one-third of the whole surface ranked as mountain land; on this basis each tribe was taxed, and was required to pay in silver; a tax on property replaced the old taxes on commodities; he struck coins with the words "Allah is our God," "Mohammed is our Prophet," "The Mahdi is our Iman." He maintained a fleet and an army; and the country was so well policed that caravans could move throughout it without fear. Never had Africa enjoyed such discipline and such

security. At last he died, in A.D. 1163, full of years and honour.

It was not in the nature of things that a condition of such peace and prosperity should last long in Africa. Tunis, which had been created a capital city by Abdel-Moumen, under the charge of Abou Mohammed, son of Abou Hafs, declared itself independent, under the Hafside dynasty. In the west, Tlemcen rose to a position of immense prosperity and magnificence under the power of the Beni Zian Zenata, while the Beni Nerin Zenata, hitherto nomads, took possession of Fez. On the death of the last Almohade in battle in A.D. 1269, a bitter and obstinate war broke out between these two which fatally weakened the Berber rule, while the baleful influence of the Arabs was always present as a disturbing influence to hinder the Berbers of the Maghreb from advancing or developing normally.

Three dynasties emerged out of all this confusion—the Hafside at Tunis, the Ouabite at Tlemcen, and the Merinide at Fez ; but decay, rapid and certain, set in, which destroyed both civilisation and power. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Merinide kingdom was broken up, Tunis was divided, Fez had neither influence nor strength. Portugal held Tangiers and Cintra ; Spain seized Oran, Bougie, and Tripoli, and fortified the island of Peñon, off Algiers. The little helpless states recognised the suzerainty of the kings of Castile, paid tribute, and received garrisons. The Berber kingdoms and dynasties had died down to the roots. Anarchy, complete and hopeless, reigned everywhere. Once more the country waited only, and not in vain, for some invader from without to come and seize it.

## CHAPTER XV

### AN AFRICAN MECCA

#### KAIROUAN

WHAT Cirta was to the Natives ; what Carthage was to the Foreigners, whether Punic or Roman ; what Algiers was destined to be to the Turks, that, and more, Kairouan has been to the Arabs. Cirta was a strong natural fortress, besieged eighty times and taken only twice ; Carthage was a seaport ; Kairouan was neither. It is indeed difficult to find any adequate reason for the selection of the place as the site of a great capital city. Very different and contradictory explanations have been given by various writers. One says that, being near the mountains and near the sea, so as to be in touch with both, yet safe from either, it was both strategically and commercially of vast importance. In reply it may be pointed out that it never stood a siege successfully, and that this alone is sufficient to condemn it commercially also. Another tells us that, being the most unattractive spot he could find, with no natural resources, and little or no water, Okba chose it as an act of faith in the protecting and providing goodness of Allah.

The account given by En Noweiri is delightfully vague : " Okba had been entrusted by the Khalifah with the government of the new province of Ifrikya. From Sousse he marched out, and at a distance of thirteen miles he happened upon a citadel held by the Berbers ; they refused to let him pass, so he took it,

and went on his way, until he came to a valley filled with trees and scrub, a habitation of wild beasts and owls. So he prayed to God, and said to the beasts, 'Inhabitants of this valley, begone, and may God have mercy upon you; we intend to abide here.' When he had thus proclaimed three times, the serpents and scorpions and other unknown beasts began to depart before the very eyes of the spectators. Thus was Kairouan founded."

The valley and trees have vanished with the scorpions, and Kairouan lies on a dreary, waterless expanse, on the road to nowhere. Destroyed over and over again, its sanctity as the foundation of Sidi Okba, the darling hero-martyr of the Arabs, and as the resting-place of Sidi Sahab,<sup>1</sup> Friend of the Prophet, has always ensured its restoration; but peace and safety came to it only with loss of importance, when the capital was moved to Tunis. Now it is like Canterbury, venerable from its history and associations, rich in the haunting beauty of splendid ecclesiastical buildings, but politically derelict, in an age when religion has little influence on practical conduct.

To the south of the city a little French town has sprung up, and on the west it is enclosed by the great suburb of the Zlass,<sup>2</sup> which is almost as large as the town itself. But the Arab town has been religiously respected. Within the circle of its battlemented walls, with their strong towers and gates intact, the domes and minarets of its mosques and zaouias, all dominated by the enormous tower of the Great Mosque, it has preserved, more even than Tunis, its picturesque character as the African Mecca.

<sup>1</sup> Probably it was the fact that Sidi Sahab had been buried there which made Okba select it as the site of his caravan. It had a Roman predecessor, *Vicus Augusti*.

<sup>2</sup> A tribe of nomads, who form the best customers of Kairouan.

Due north and south from the Bab-et-Tunis, near the Kasbah, to the Bab Djelladin (Skinners), runs the principal street, now called the Rue Saussier, lined on each side with little shops and stalls, and bright with the varied colours of the dresses of the natives and pilgrims from all parts of Africa ; to the right of this street lie the Souks, which deserve a visit, though they are neither so large nor so interesting as those of Tunis.

But it is to see the mosques and zaouias of Kairouan that people come, even more than to see Kairouan itself. So, without longer preface, let us turn to these.

The Djama Kebira, or Djama Sidi Okba, occupies the eastern extremity of the city, just inside the walls. The building of the first mosque by Sidi Okba himself was accompanied, as was only right, by great and notable miracles. The stones took their appointed places of their own accord, and a voice from heaven determined the exact position of the Kibba, or Mihrab, the niche which, in every mosque, shows the direction of Mecca, towards which prayer must be offered.

But even these divine interpositions were insufficient to preserve the mosque. Twenty-five years later it was pulled down, with the exception of the Kibba, by Hassan ibn Noman, who brought from Carthage, and perhaps Sousse, the pillars with which his new building was adorned. Prominent amongst these are the two splendid columns of red and yellow marble which stand on either side of the Mihrab ; it is said that they came from a Christian church, and that the Emperor of Constantinople offered to buy them for their weight in gold. This second mosque was replaced by a larger in A.D. 724, and this by a larger still





MOSQUE OF SIDI OKBA, DJAMA KEBIRA, KAIROUAN

in A.D. 772. Finally, in A.D. 821, Ziadet Allah, the second prince of the House of Aghleb, razed it to the ground, including the Mihrab of Sidi Okba, and built the mosque which we now see.

It consists of two parts : the court, corresponding to the *patio* of a Spanish mosque and the atrium of a Christian basilica, and the mosque itself ; the whole is enclosed by a lofty buttressed wall with handsome projecting gateways, and covers an area of one hundred and forty yards by eighty-seven.

The outer court is impressive from its great size, but is not architecturally successful. It is surrounded by a very splendid double colonnade, but, as in the Piazza di San Marco at Venice, all is dwarfed and spoilt by the too vast extent of the court itself ; and this effect is still further increased by the enormous height and bulk of the square minaret, which reduces all else to insignificance. The arches of the colonnade are pointed, and show hardly any trace of the horse-shoe form ; they rest on clustered pillars of marble. In the court are four handsome bases of pillars, hollowed out for the ritual ablutions of the faithful ; the water is drawn from four cisterns under the edifice. In the centre is a sundial, a tall stone crowned with a vertical stick and string, each of which tells the hour by the shadows cast on two separate dials. It is mounted high up on steps and is enclosed by a railing. Here, as the hour for midday prayer approached, an old white-robed attendant of the mosque was standing watching intently for the shadow to reach the appointed spot. From the top of the square tower of the minaret another man was watching him. When the creeping shadows reached the places upon the dials, he raised his hand. Immediately a white flag floated out from the minaret and the musical droning cry of the

muezzin was taken up from tower to tower throughout the town.

It is natural, almost inevitable, to compare this, the greatest mosque of Africa,<sup>1</sup> with that of Cordova, built only a few years before. So far as the outer court is concerned, there can be little hesitation in giving the palm to Spain. Not only is the minaret far more beautiful—the African minarets are for the most part uninteresting—but a perfect harmony of proportion has been preserved between the front of the Mezquita, the surrounding buildings, and the crowning tower, which makes the Patio de los Naranjos, seen through the pleasant light and shade of its grove of palms and oranges, one of the most beautiful sights in Spain.

But when we leave the court and enter the mosque itself, it is very doubtful whether this verdict ought not to be reversed. There is nothing at Cordova to compare with the magnificent range of splendidly carved doorways which open into the building, each door a wonder of wood-carving ; while, on entering, it is hard to conceive an interior more gracious in colour, more perfect in proportion, more lovely in form, in a word, more satisfying, than the wonderful maze of marble pillars, supporting graceful horseshoe arches, which stretches in all directions, mystifying without confusing the eye.

Happily the Moslem builders were seldom led astray by that fatal megalomania which has been the curse, architecturally as well as in other ways, of pagan and papal Rome. Beautiful as the horseshoe arch is, it is structurally false, and, if used on a scale large enough to be impressive from its size, it weakens and destroys the general effect by revealing its own untruthfulness.

<sup>1</sup> It is said that the mosques of Tunis are fine ; certainly they are large but they are not open to strangers.

To produce the effect of size, the architects were therefore driven to the multiplication table ; and, if we are to say that the Cordova building is grander than that at Kairouan, it will not be because each pillar is more precious, or each arch more lovely, but because in the one case the pillars number nearly twelve hundred, and in the other hardly two.

Of course the Cordova Mezquita has undergone disastrous mutilations. Its size has been doubled—that fatal multiplication—an alien and inharmonious cathedral has been dropped into the middle of it, its splendid ceiling of wood has been largely replaced with vulgar whitewashed vaults,<sup>1</sup> its windows have been fitted with incredibly bad glass, the delicate curves of its arches have been emphasised and outraged by being cut up into alternate wedges of red and white paint. Such calamities as these the sister mosque of Kairouan has mercifully been spared. Large enough to be mysterious without being bewildering,<sup>2</sup> with little light but such as pours in when its vast doors are opened, its vistas of pillared aisles have all the solemnity and dignity which we associate with the holders of the creed.

From the central door,<sup>3</sup> a nave, loftier, richer in decoration and nobler in form than the others, leads to a Mihrab as beautiful as that at Tlemcen, and hardly suffering by comparison with that miracle of form and colour, the Mihrab at Cordova.

The story goes that, in a fit of drunken madness, Ibrahim-el-Aghlab made his wives offer him worship as a god. Next morning, full of remorse, he sent for the

<sup>1</sup> The wooden ceilings are, however, being restored.

<sup>2</sup> It is divided into seventeen aisles by arcades of ten pillars each. The mosque at Cordova has nineteen aisles and arcades of thirty-three pillars.

<sup>3</sup> In Africa, as in Spain, the mosques are carefully orientated north-west and south-east.

Grand Mufti, confessed, and implored penance and absolution. The Mufti replied that, as the sin had been against God, the atonement must be made to God, and directed that some marvellous tiles, brought from Baghdad to decorate his palace, and some carved wood destined to make instruments of music, should be given to the adornment of the House of God, which he was then building. Ibrahim obeyed, and the metallic lustre of the tiles now shines out of the gloom on the walls of the Mihrab, while the wood carvings, quaintly fitted together,<sup>1</sup> form the magnificent mimbar or pulpit.

One other marvel the mosque possesses ; it is the splendid maksoura, or enclosure for women, surrounded by screens of exquisitely carved wood, which Abou Temmim el Moezz ibn Bâdes erected to the right of the mimbar. It remains intact, and luminous with the coloured light which pours through its stained windows, fitted with delicate tracery of perforated marble ; it helps us to picture what the splendour of the mosque must have been in the days of its glory.

Such an architecture as we have described, so little susceptible of grandeur of treatment, but so beautiful in detail of form and colour, lends itself admirably to a series of small courts or rooms, such as are suitable in houses or in the midas,<sup>2</sup> or places for ablutions, which we find at the entrance of mosques.

A very perfect example of such a building is found in the Zaouia of Sidi Sahab, commonly called the Mosque of the Barber, which stands just outside Kairouan near the great basin or tank of the Aghlabites.

<sup>1</sup> Every panel is different, and every one deserves separate and detailed description.

<sup>2</sup> An exquisite example of a mida has been re-erected in the Parc du Belvedere at Tunis.

Far from being a barber, Abou-Zoumat Obeid Allah ibn Adam el Beloui was a mighty man of valour. He earned his title of Sidi Sahab (the Companion), by being one of the ten earliest disciples who took the oath of fidelity to the Prophet under the lote tree. After the death of his master, he took part in the conquest of Egypt, and in the expedition led into Ifrikyia by Moouia ibn Koudiedj in the year A.D. 655 (A.H. 34). Mortally wounded in the attack on Sbeitla in the following year, he died and was buried at Kairouan. At the last solemn interview when Mohammed bade farewell to his Sahabs—his Knights of the Round Table—he gave El Beloui three hairs from his beard, that by them he might be recognised at the Day of Judgment. El Beloui directed that the precious relics should be buried with him, one being laid on his lips, one on his heart, and one under his right arm, in token that his eloquence, his love, and his might had all been given to the service of the master he loved. A touching legend which deserved to bear better fruit than simply to win for El Beloui the title of Barber!

The mosque, which is the loveliest in Kairouan, comprises a Medersa or college, a Zaouia or hostel, as well as the Kouba or shrine of the saint, and place of pilgrimage. It is in just such a cluster of buildings as this, as in the Alhambra at Granada, that Arab<sup>1</sup> builders are at their best.

The principal entrance opens on a large, bare courtyard. To the left, hidden by a lofty wall, lie the collegiate buildings of the Zaouia and its mosque; in front is the entrance to the shrine. In the angle between the two rises the fine square minaret.

<sup>1</sup> Better, perhaps, "Berber" or "Moorish." It is very doubtful whether the Arabs deserve the credit of any of the great buildings in either Spain or Africa.

Under a lofty archway, we pass into a vestibule of great beauty ; its panelled and recessed ceiling is richly painted and its walls glow with the colours of ancient tiles. Thence a door opens into the atrium.

This is small, being, indeed, little more than a flight of half-a-dozen steps, with tiled risers, and a passage-way into the next chamber. It is open to the air, but on each side is an arcade of slender pillars bearing horseshoe arches, and forming a little cloister with carved benches for the weary pilgrims to rest on. The walls are covered with a high dado of exquisite old lusted tiles ; above these are vases of flowers alternating with these strange spear-head or flame-like ornaments<sup>1</sup> which every Arab uses, but none can explain. The whole is tiny, but the grace of the pillars and arches, the glowing colours of the rich old tiles, the inlaid marble of the floor, the white marble entrance to the room beyond, all seen in the dazzling sunshine which pours down from above through the open roof, make this little passage one of the most lovely things in North Africa. The sun, indeed, is necessary, for the builders loved bright lights and deep shadows, but when half the walls are seen in a living blaze of light, and the rest is shrouded in the coolness of the shadows, the eye, half dazzled, half rested, is wholly satisfied. It is with Arab art as with Arab dress. It is the glory of the sunshine on which the Arab counts and which enables him to wear or use colours and contrasts which would be garish, if not impossible, without it.

From the atrium we pass into a square-domed chamber in which no colour has been employed. The white walls are richly covered with the deeply incised patterns in plaster to which we give the name of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* "Signs and Symbols," 27, Part II., Chapter XII.

arabesques ; above these rise a series of windows, filled with coloured glass, framed in intricate patterns of pierced stucco. Higher still rises the white dome, divided into twenty-four segments, each of which contains a palm leaf, differently treated. Nothing could be more delightful than this little white shadowy room, between the glow of the atrium we have just left, and the glare of the central court of the mosque which we are about to enter.

Thus we reach the innermost court of the sanctuary. Like so much that we have passed already, it is richly decorated with ancient tiles, on which rests a frieze of beautiful incised plaster ; it is surrounded by a graceful arcade resting in slender white marble columns, and it is paved with white marble. On three sides the arcade has a flat, timbered ceiling. On the fourth a second storey, resting on the arcade, affords space on the outside for more tiles, set in square conventional patterns, like windows, and also enables the ceiling to be carried higher, and elaborated with rich recessed coffers and little domes. For now we come to the centre of all this loveliness, the Kouba of the saint himself. At the far end of the arcade, a handsome door between two windows of white and coloured marbles—all of elaborate Italian rococo work, incongruous yet not inharmonious—opens into the shrine.

A story attaches to these Italian carvings. In the eighteenth century a rich merchant of Kairouan had an Italian doctor amongst his slaves. Nursed through a severe illness, and his life practically saved by his skill and care, the master set the slave free, and sent him home a rich man. Not to be outdone in generosity, the doctor sent these carvings to his former master for use in this mosque and Zaouia, of which he was the administrator.

The shrine is of the usual type, a square, domed room with stalactite roof. Its tiles and the coloured designs on the walls are rich but modern, and, at present, somewhat staring. In the centre is the tomb or catafalque, covered with rich tapestries and surrounded by a wooden grille on which are hung glass balls, decorated ostrich eggs, lamps, and little bags of holy earth brought by the faithful from Mecca ; above it are draped flags and banners presented by various benefactors ; one of the richest was given by Mustapha ibn Ismael, Prime Minister of the Bey es Sadok, in hopes of ensuring the defeat of the French by the intervention of the saint.

Before leaving we pause a minute or two to drink in all the quiet beauty of this dream of peaceful loveliness. The mosque is deserted, and hitherto we have been left to wander as we pleased ; now an old caretaker comes up and speaks ; he is afraid we have not noticed sufficiently the magnificence of the carpets, all made in Kairouan, with which the floor of the Kouba is covered. An aged widow—only widows are allowed in mosques or expected to pray—has been telling her beads in the shrine ; now she leaves it and visits the other subordinate shrines, saying prayers in each. She and the caretaker are evidently friends, and exchange a kindly greeting as they pass. And so we leave this home—as we saw it—of ancient peace, and go out into the glare and dust of the road to Kairouan.

A few words must suffice for the other buildings of Kairouan. The Djama Zitouna (Mosque of the Olive Tree) is interesting in that it was founded by Rouifa ibn Tsabit, one of the Ansars or Friends who welcomed the Prophet at Medina after his flight from Mecca, the Hejira. This and the dedication of the mosque of





DJAMA AMAR ABBADA, KAIROUAN

Sidi Sahab would seem to show that the site was sacred before Okba founded his Caravan here. The Djama Sidi bou Djafour is called the Djama Tleta Biban from its three handsome doors, very Byzantine in character. They are set in a curious façade enriched with long Cufic inscriptions, in four retreating lines, surmounted by a bold cornice. Many of the Zaouias are beautiful, notably that of Sidi Abid el Gahriani. The vast basin of the Aghlabites helps to recall the perished glories of the city.

Very imposing, too, is the vast Mosque and Zaouia of Si Amor Abbada ; its group of five great domes shows the influence of Turkish over Arab art. The little mosque and marabout of the saint are bare and undecorated ; all round them stand huge decaying panels of wood, carved with the sayings and prophecies of the marabout. It is said that one of them foretold the coming of the French.

Amor Abbada was a blacksmith, and could neither read nor write. After he became a marabout he practised his art only in making huge, clumsy sabres in wooden scabbards ; from these the mosque takes its name. One of these is shown in the mosque, also a huge wooden pipe five feet long, which, we are assured, the saint was wont to use. If we ask how that could be, we are told that he was a giant. He obtained complete ascendancy over the Bey Ahmed Pacha, who presented him with a duplicate of the pipe in silver ; this unaccountably vanished at the death of the saint. Amor Abbada himself collected the money to erect the huge pile, in the course of three years.

All this is interesting, as illustrating the power and influence of the marabouts, and the rapidity with which legend gathers round them ; for Amor Abbada died in 1856.

At last, tired head, eyes and feet, we left the town by the western gate, Bab-el-Djedid, to watch the solemn pageant of the sunset. Passing through the quarter of the Zlass, we climbed the steep little hill on which stands the Moslem cemetery. Enclosed in its white wall, the white Kouba watches over the white graves which lie thick around. Above it hung the crescent moon. To the west ran the heights of the Djebel Trozza, pale, grey, and shrouded in the rising mist of the evening. Between us and them lay the plain, purple and green—dark in the distance under the mountains, but fading into a dull green under the cemetery hill.

All was quiet, save for the barking of a dog in the city and the low droning cry of the muezzins calling the faithful to prayer. Close by passed a string of tired camels coming out of the desert to rest in the Fondouk of the Zlass; others wandered to and fro, searching for "camel salad" in the rough scrub which covered the ground. A shepherd, leading his flock home from pasture, stopped at the call of the muezzin to bow to the earth in prayer. Some belated Arabs were leaving the town with their laden asses and passed and vanished in the distance.

Close by lay Kairouan, shut up within its walls. Above them rose a forest of white domes and minarets, nearest of all the five great domes of the Djama Amor Abbada; far off, across the flat white roofs, the huge mass of the Tower of the Djama Kebira; all glowing in dazzling light, their outlines seeming to quiver in the translucent bath of sunny air.

Then a cool breeze sprang up; the shadows lengthened, the white changed to pink, the pink to crimson, and the shadows of the hills began to rise, as the sun sank one glorious blood-red, behind them.

The light and colour faded and died out, and ever clearer and clearer grew the cold rays of the crescent moon, showing a darkness it could not dispel ; and the domes and minarets stood out hard, white, and dead against a black sky.

A fitting picture of the long tragedy we have been following, of the sea of blood in which the sun of Roman and Christian civilisation set, and of the chill, dark desolation of Islam which has settled down on Africa.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS, A.D. 1453-1830

IN North Africa, as in Europe, the sixteenth century was a time of profound change. Old forces had spent themselves, old fires had burnt themselves out. North of the Mediterranean it witnessed the Renaissance, and the apogee and decline of the great kingdoms of Spain and Portugal; in Africa it saw the coming of the Turks and the final establishment of Islamism.

The streams of Arab invasion, which had swept over the land as far as the borders of Morocco, had ceased to flow, and the balance between the natives and the invaders had reached an equilibrium. Roughly speaking, the Berbers, hardly touched or affected by the Arab deluge which had submerged the lowlands, held Morocco and the mountainous districts such as the Aures and the Djurdjura. The Arabs occupied the south, including Southern Tunisia and the Oases; and a mixed population of Berberised Arabs or Arabised Berbers held the valleys and the plateaux.

The influence of Islamism is rather difficult to estimate. Nominally it was universally accepted. Practically the popular form was what we might call a vague form of nonconformity. Certainly there was little or none of that violent antipathy to Christianity which we now associate with Mohammedanism. The intercourse with Christian Europe was, on the whole, friendly. Treaties were made and observed. At Tunis, Cirta, and elsewhere, there were Christian

quarters. At Tunis there was a Christian church until A.D. 1530. Above all, neither the Arabs nor the Berbers were maritime folk ; there was no aggression, and the Mediterranean was a Christian lake.

But a new force was appearing on the scene, which was to bring all this to an end.

On May 29, A.D. 1453, Constantinople fell before the conquering sword of Mohammed II., and the capital of the Christian Empire of the East became the seat of the Turkish Sultan. Unlike the Arabs, the Turks, and especially the Greek islanders, whom they conquered and absorbed, were seamen, and their half pirate and wholly savage navies soon swept the Midland Sea. Making their strongholds in the islands of the Ægean, especially at Mitylene (Lesbos), they spread far and wide. They had reached North Africa, and occupied Mehadia, on the east coast of Tunis, as early as A.D. 1390 ; and the English, under John de Beaufort, the natural son of the Duke of Lancaster, had tried in vain to dislodge them.

In A.D. 1492 Granada fell, and with it the Moorish kingdom in Spain. The Moors, who were driven back into Africa and settled largely in the seaport cities, were also experienced seamen and knew the coast of Spain well. Exasperated by their banishment, they not only sought for any opportunity of revenging themselves upon Spain, but extended their animosity to all Christian powers, and so there was imported into their warfare that spirit of bigoted and malignant hatred which had hitherto been absent.

Three things had come to pass, which were to bear terrible fruit during the next three hundred years. The war was to be waged on the sea, and not on the land ; Christian Europe was to be for the future the object of attack ; and war was to be merciless, and

waged with savage and implacable hatred against Christians as Christians.

The year of the fall of Granada saw the appointment of Gonzales Ximenes di Cisneros as confessor to Isabella. Three years later, A.D. 1495, she secured his appointment as Archbishop of Toledo; the power which he thus obtained was used unsparingly against the Moslems. In A.D. 1499, he felt himself strong enough to offer the Moors, who still formed the most cultured portion of the population of Granada, the option of baptism or banishment. It was his action, especially after his appointment (A.D. 1507) as Grand Inquisitor, far more than the victory of Ferdinand and Isabella, which ruined the south of Spain.

Events moved rapidly. In A.D. 1504 Isabella died, and Ferdinand resigned in favour of his son-in-law, Philip. Two years later, in September A.D. 1506, Philip also died suddenly, leaving the throne to his son Charles, a boy of six years old. The shock of her husband's death entirely upset the always feeble intellect of his wife, the unhappy Jane, and Ferdinand became Regent. In A.D. 1505 Ximenes, who had conceived the idea of a Christian and Spanish empire in North Africa, despatched a squadron which succeeded in capturing the port of Mers-el-Kebir, five miles from Oran, on October 23, and Diego Fernandez de Cordova, Marquis de Comares, who was in command, was appointed Governor. In A.D. 1509 Ximenes, now become Cardinal and Grand Inquisitor, fitted out another expedition, which he commanded in person. On May 17 he reached Mers-el-Kebir; on the following day Oran was taken, and Ximenes returned to Spain. In the same year Pedro Navarro seized and garrisoned Bougie. Between Oran and his new acquisition he found a small town, walled indeed, but with

no effective fortifications, and no considerable harbour. The town he left untouched, but he seized and fortified strongly a rocky island known as the Peñon or Rock, which lay off it, at a distance of less than three hundred yards. It was from this island, and others which have now disappeared, that the town received its name of El-Djezaïr, Algiers.

Seven years later, A.D. 1516, Ferdinand died, and the opportunity seemed to the Algerines a favourable one for trying to free themselves from the "thorn" which the Spaniards had driven "into their heart." Unable to effect their own deliverance, they called to their aid Salam et Teumi, the Arab Sheik of Blidah, to whom they offered the sovereignty of the town. He accepted the proffered dignity, but entirely failed to capture the Peñon. His failure brought upon the scene two men, who, like the Hautevilles of Normandy, were destined to change the whole course of North African, and, in a measure, European history.

In the year A.D. 1462, when Mohammed II. captured Mitylene, he left behind a Romanean Sipahi called Yacub, who seems to have settled down as a potter and adopted Islamism. He had four sons, Elias, Ishac, Aroudj, and Khisr, better known as Kheir-ed-Din. Aroudj, or, as he is commonly called, Father Aroudj (Baba Aroudj, Barbarossa), and Khisr, perhaps the others also, forsook their father's humble trade for the more profitable business of piracy. Aroudj soon acquired fame as a Reis, but unfortunately was captured by the Knights of Rhodes, and had to pull an oar in their galleys. Finally he escaped and landed in Ifrikya. He placed his services at the disposal of the Hafside Sultan of Tunis, on the understanding that the port was to be open to him on payment of one-fifth of whatever booty he might secure.

He soon justified the arrangement by bringing in two royal galleys of Pope Julius II., which he had captured off Elba with two galleots.<sup>1</sup> Soon Tunis was too strait for the great Reis, and he established himself in a port of his own in Djerba, the island of the Lotus-eaters. There he was joined by his brother, Kheir-ed-Din.

In A.D. 1512 he was invited to assist in turning the Spaniards out of Bougie, but the attempts ended in total failure. He was repulsed, with the loss of an arm, and Doria, the famous Spanish Admiral, pursued him to Tunis, took and sacked the fortress and town, and destroyed half the fleet. Aroudj escaped to Djerba, and set to work to build another fleet. In A.D. 1514 he again attacked Bougie, and was again beaten off. Frantic with rage, he burnt his ships to save them from falling into the hands of the Spaniards.

Something had to be done, for both Tunis and Djerba were now too hot to hold him. Happily the people of Djidjelli came to the rescue, and elected him as their Sultan. This was the turning-point of his career.

Utterly unable to capture the Peñon from the Spaniards, Salam invited the celebrated condottiero to come to his assistance. Aroudj advanced at once with five thousand men and set to work in true corsair fashion. Salam he strangled with his own hands; his wife he forced to commit suicide; the rest of the harem he slaughtered; the town he delivered up to be sacked; thus he made himself master of everything except the Peñon, which he left alone. Such enterprise naturally endeared him to the heart of the Berbers, and with their assistance he pushed farther west and seized Tenes, leaving his brother Kheir-ed-din to hold Algiers.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 280.

Such a man as Aroudj was not likely to remain idle for long. At Tenes he received another invitation to help in replacing the aged King, Abou Zian, on the throne of Tlemcen. This call he also obeyed, and proceeded to carry out his new duties in his usual way. He cut the throats of the King, his seven sons, and some thousands of the inhabitants, and made himself master of the place. But this was the last of his exploits. The Marquis of Comares, the Spanish Governor of Oran, received orders to deal with the matter. He advanced against Tlemcen, drove Aroudj out, pursued him, and, after a desperate resistance, killed him at Rio Salado. This was in the year A.D. 1518. Aroudj was forty-four years old.

Kheir-ed-din, who was holding Algiers, inherited his brother's sovereignty and name, for he is always known as Barbarossa. He was not merely a buccaneer like Aroudj, but a statesman, wise in counsel, prudent in action, as well as furious in attack. His first step was a masterpiece of statesmanlike diplomacy; he made submission to the Sultan of Turkey, and thus passed at once from the position of a mere marauding freebooter to that of the accredited subject and officer of a great empire. The Sultan Selim created him Pacha, sent him a contingent of two thousand men, and proclaimed that all who served in the war in North Africa should enjoy the pay and privileges of Janissaries. Thus reinforced, Kheir-ed-din was able to capture the Peñon, A.D. 1529. The gallant commander, Don Martin de Vargas, he killed, the garrison was enslaved, the fort destroyed, and with the materials, the island was connected with the mainland by a mole. Thus was formed the harbour of Algiers, which for the next three hundred years was to be the scourge of the Mediterranean and the disgrace of Christendom—the

home and stronghold of the terrible Barbary corsairs. The really great abilities of Kheir-ed-din marked him for promotion. The Sultan Soliman summoned him to Constantinople and made him Admiral<sup>1</sup>-in-Chief of his fleets, with the title of Captain Pacha. In A.D. 1534 he dethroned Mulai Hassan, King of Tunis, but was eventually driven out again by the Spaniards under Charles V. in person. At last, in A.D. 1547, he died at the age of nearly ninety years, and was buried at Beshiktash.

Meanwhile the appointment of Charles V. as Emperor had diverted his attention from the south to the north, and the command of the sea in the Mediterranean was rapidly passing out of Christian hands. In A.D. 1541 a great crusade was launched against Algiers, but, aided by an opportune storm, Hassan Agha was able to repulse it, and the town gained the character of being impregnable. In A.D. 1554 the Sultan Salat Reis drove the Spaniards from Bougie; in the following year the Knights of St. John were forced to evacuate Tripoli. Tunis, taken and retaken, was from A.D. 1574 governed by a Bey appointed by the Sultan. To the west the Turks made themselves masters of Tlemcen and Mostaganem; and the Spaniards, though not expelled, were closely blockaded in Oran. Lastly, the Cherifs of Fez drove the Portuguese from the coasts of Morocco.

The position of the Turks in Africa was more akin to that of the Carthaginians than to that of the Romans; it was not a conquest and occupation of the country generally, but of the seaboard, and of the country only so far as was necessary. The natives

<sup>1</sup> "Admiral," or "Amiral," is derived from "Emir." It is strange that, of the three chief titles in the navy, no one is English. "Admiral" is Arabic, "Captain" Latin, and "Lieutenant" French.

were profoundly influenced and leavened by the newcomers, but not conquered or seriously interfered with. Even in Algiers men are spoken of as natives, or Berbers, or Kabyles, or Arabs, but not as Turks. The business of the Turks was on the sea, not on the land. The Pœni were traders, the Turks were pirates; the business was different, but the scene was the same.

The influence of the Turks upon North Africa, so far as it affected the country at large, was wholly bad. Agriculture was ruined by the general anarchy which prevailed, the oppressive taxes laid upon it, the irregularity and violence with which they were raised, and the practical prohibition of exportation; even the Metidja, one of the most fertile spots upon the face of the earth, was reduced to a desert, uncultivated and without inhabitants. No effort was made to restore order, rather the unrest was encouraged and welcomed, as enabling the Turks to hold sway with but little trouble and an incredibly small army.

Their domination rested upon the support of the *Maghzen*,<sup>1</sup> warlike tribes whom they had been unable to subdue, and so had attached them to themselves by exempting them from taxation, and entrusting to them the very profitable privilege of collecting tribute from the other tribes, known as *Raïas*. This tribute was raised when convenient and possible, and at the point of the sword, for the natives were in a state of continual rebellion. But it had to pass through many greedy hands on its way to the treasury at Algiers, and but little of it reached its destination.

For administrative purposes the country was divided into three Beyliks; one of el Titteri, south of Algiers, another of Constantine to the east, the third of

<sup>1</sup> "Maghzen"—our "magazine"—meant originally a military store. "Raïas" or "Rayahs," means "tributary."

Oran to the west ; but the Beys were appointed by the Deys, and rose and fell with them, so that here also there was no security of tenure, and consequently no stability or continuity of policy or rule.

The nucleus and backbone of the standing army, or *Oudjak*, were the *Yoldash*, or infantry. These were pure Turks, all others being jealously excluded ; they constituted or elected the Divan, and were the real masters of Algiers, making and unmaking Deys at their will ; the only check upon their power was the influence exerted by the *Taiffe*, the strong Corporation of the Reis or Captains of the Corsairs. They were not kept continually with the colours, but after a year's active service under canvas (*Mehalla*), they spent a year in garrison work (*Nourba*), followed by a year's leave or rest (*Krezour*). The cavalry consisted of native horsemen (*Spahis*), and *Couloughlis*—the sons of Turks by native women, for the Turks did not bring their wives with them to Algiers. In active warfare they were reinforced by the tribesmen of the *Maghzen*, the *Zben-touts*, a picked corps of the most infamous pirates of the Mediterranean, and the *Zemala*, or outlaws from other countries, who had settled and been given land in Algeria.

Practically, however, Kheir-ed-din's fame rests upon the fact that he was the founder of Algiers as a corsair stronghold, the chosen home of the worst desperadoes in the world. Yet at first the rulers of Algiers were not, in the full sense of the word, pirates. They fought the Holy War against infidels, but they did it as subjects of Turkey ; they respected Powers which were at peace with their suzerain, and the government was, nominally at least, in the hands of a Pacha appointed by the Sultan. But it was a far cry to Constantinople ; the links with Turkey rapidly grew

weaker and weaker, and the real power passed into the hands of the soldiery, who revived the glories of the old Prætorian Guard of Rome, making and unmaking rulers at their pleasure, removing any unpopular Pacha by assassination, and keeping the real power in the hands of their own commander or Agha. At first he was given only the title of Dey, or Protector, but soon the two offices were united, and he became in name, what he had long been in fact, the Pacha.<sup>1</sup>

Algiers had neither trade nor commerce ; she had no business, no occupation, no adequate source of income, save piracy. It is little wonder that piracy was soon raised to the level of an exact science. Soldiers, sailors, officials, from the Dey downwards, were paid out of its profits. No prizes meant no pay ; and so the success of the captain, or Reis, was much more important than his methods. All comers were welcome, on the sole condition that they adopted the faith of Islam, a condition which was adequately fulfilled by renouncing every other. As a matter of fact, the great majority of the pirate captains were renegades ; in A.D. 1581 this was true of twenty-two out of thirty-six, and seven years later of twenty-four out of thirty-five. Year by year the power of Algiers and the audacity of its rovers increased. They refused to be bound by any treaty longer than suited their convenience. They declined to be on friendly terms with more than two or three Christian powers at a time, in order that they might plunder the rest. They enforced humiliating terms of peace and restrictions on commerce ; they interfered with the navigation laws ; they claimed the right to search every vessel they met,

<sup>1</sup> 1547-1587, Beylerbeys ; 1587-1659, Pachas, appointed triennially ; 1659-1671, Aghas ; 1671-1830, Deys.

and to fix the number of passengers that each might carry. All captives were sold in open market as slaves, the representatives of powerful monarchs were sent to work in the mines, or were blown from guns, on the smallest provocation. And all this, so amazing to us, was possible simply because each Christian Power in turn found it more convenient to use an infamous horde of savages as a scourge for other Powers, than to join with the rest to destroy it. It was not until well on in the nineteenth century, when the Napoleonic wars were over, that Europe was sufficiently united to close this open sore. It was left to France finally to heal it.<sup>1</sup>

The vessels employed by the Barbary corsairs were essentially rowing-boats. Even when they carried a mast and lateen sail, these were used only when the weather was favourable, and in search of prey. Tacking or beating up against the wind were little understood, and were not much in favour. For business, the corsairs trusted entirely to the oar. The craft used in the Mediterranean were of three classes, the galley, the galleot, and the brigantine. The galley carried a crew of about one hundred and thirty officers and soldiers, and about two hundred and seventy rowers; these were all Christian slaves. There was a deck in the poop for the officers, the Reis who commanded the ship, and the Agha who commanded the soldiers, neither of these being subordinate to the other. In the prow there was another deck for the soldiers. The waist, where the rowers sat, was open. Down the middle ran a bridge or gangway, for the use of the sailors when feeding the slaves, and of the boat-swains when plying the whip. Each oar was about

<sup>1</sup> For many of the following details I am indebted to *The Barbary Corsairs*, by Stanley Lane Poole, in "The Story of the Nations" Series.

fifteen feet long, and required four to six men to pull it.

The galleot was similar in character, but smaller. It carried about one hundred soldiers and two hundred sailors, two or three to each oar. These were the most popular vessels. Smallest of all was the brigantine. This carried no soldiers, and no crew except the rowers, who were therefore Moslems, not slaves. Only one man was required for each oar.

The Algerines prided themselves upon the sharp run of their vessels, and this meant that but very little room could be allotted to the rowers. Five or six men at a single oar had to live and work in a space about ten feet by four ; this was their home, night and day, for about six months at a stretch. A strong man would pull an oar for about twenty years.

The slaves were chained to the benches, on which they sat when not at work ; for rowing they had to stand. In rowing the arms were stretched straight out, and the head held low, to escape the backs of the men in front, and the oar of the men behind. When at full reach forward, the handle of the oar was raised to catch the water, and the rowers, with one foot on the stretcher and one on the bench in front, so as to get their full weight on, flung themselves back, with all their might, upon the bench behind them. In the case of a stern chase, proverbially a long one, this tremendous, heart-breaking work had to be kept up for ten, twelve, or even twenty hours without intermission or relaxation. Sailors walked up and down the gangway and put bits of bread dipped in wine into the rowers' mouths, but it was considered that the slaves worked better on an empty stomach, and the boatswains preferred to trust to the whip. If the men were working well, they were scourged to encourage them ; if a man

flagged, he was scourged harder ; if he sank down, he was scourged until he got up and set to work again ; if, finally, he could not rise, he was thrown overboard.<sup>1</sup>

When a Christian vessel was captured, the rowers were set free, and the crew, soldiers, gentlemen adventurers, Knights of Rhodes or Malta, as the case might be, were chained to the benches in their places, and the ship, in charge of a prize crew, was sent straight to Algiers. There she was at once boarded by the port officials, the liberated slaves were landed, and the oars were dropped into the water and towed ashore to prevent all fear of escape. The cargo was sold ; the Government claimed one-fifth to one-eighth of the value, and the hulks. The rest was divided between the owners and the crew, who received no regular pay. The captives were carefully examined and divided into two categories, those who should be sold for work, and those who were to be held to ransom. They were at once put up for sale. Of the price offered sixty zequins per head was given to the captors. The rest belonged to the Dey, and was paid into the Khrasn , or Treasury.

It is said that slaves were treated with tolerable kindness. With regard to those who were held for ransom, this may be accepted as true ; in fact they were hardly treated as slaves at all. In respect to others, the statement requires considerable modification. The life of the galley slaves has been described. All that can be said, at the best, is that the brutality of their treatment was not gratuitous or inflicted merely for the pleasure of giving pain ; and the same was probably true of other slaves. Their owners wanted to get all the work they could out of them, and were absolutely callous as to the means that were used.

<sup>1</sup> *Derniers Jours de la Marine   Rames*, Jarien de la Gravi re. Cf. *Barbary Corsairs*, p. 215.

The lot of the slave, like that of a mule or ox, depended upon the character of his taskmaster and of the work to which he was put.

As no Mohammedan could be held in slavery by a brother Moslem, it may seem strange that so few purchased their freedom by apostasy. But this possibility had been foreseen and was carefully guarded against by the owners, to whom the bodies of their slaves were of more account than their souls. If any slave showed symptoms of approaching conversion, he was promptly bastinadoed into a better frame of mind. An exception to this rule was, however, sometimes made by a Reis in favour of some particularly strong or active member of his crew. The renegades who commanded the ships had not, as a rule, been slaves. Christian renegades were called *ulouj*—savages or infidels, Jews were known as *selami*—a word of doubtful origin and meaning.

To some, however, no mercy was shown ; these were Moslems who had been converted to Christianity, slaves who had tried to escape, or had struck or injured a Moslem. Women were degraded to the Mohammedan level.

The story of the martyrdom of Geronimo by the Pacha Ali, a Calabrian renegade, deserves notice, partly as a typical instance of Algerian methods, and partly because of its dramatic sequel.

It was about the year A.D. 1536 when, amongst the prisoners brought into Oran by the Spaniards after a raid on some troublesome Arab tribes, was a boy of about four years old. With the others he was put up for sale as a slave. He was bought by the Vicar-General, Juan Caro, brought up as a Christian, and baptized by the name of Geronimo. During an outbreak of plague in A.D. 1542, Geronimo escaped, returned

home, and for some years lived as a Mohammedan. In May A.D. 1559, at the age of twenty-five years, he determined to leave his home, to return to Oran, and once more to adopt Christianity. He was received by his old master, Juan Caro, married to an Arab girl who was also a Christian, and enrolled in one of the squadrons called "Cuadrillas de Campo."

In May 1569 he was sent from Oran with nine companions to surprise a village or Douar on the seashore. On this expedition he was taken prisoner by a couple of Tetuan brigantines, and carried to Algiers, to be once more sold as a slave. When a body of slaves was brought in, the Pacha had a right to choose one in every ten for himself, and thus Geronimo passed into the hands of Ali. Every effort was made to induce him to renounce Christianity once more, and to return to Islam, but in vain. The Pacha was then engaged in building a fort called the Bordj-Setti-Takelilt (named afterwards, for some unknown reason, "Le Fort des Vingt-Quatre Heures"), to protect the water-gate, Bab-el-Oued, of Algiers. On September 18, A.D. 1569, he sent for Geronimo and gave him the choice of either at once renouncing Christianity, or being buried alive in one of the great cases in which blocks of concrete were being made for the construction of the fort. It was then half-past twelve o'clock.

But the faith of Geronimo was not to be shaken. The chains were then struck off his legs, he was bound hand and foot, and thrown into the case of concrete. A Spanish renegade called Tamango, who had become a Moslem under the name of Djafar, leapt in upon him, and with his heavy mallet hammered him down into the concrete. The block was then built up into the north wall of the fort, but its position was noted and





GERONIMO

remembered by "Michael of Navarre," a Christian and master mason, who was making the concrete. The facts were collected by Don Diego de Haedo, and printed in his Topography of Algiers.

In A.D. 1853 the French found it necessary to remove the fort. At half-past twelve on December 27 of that year, the explosion of a mine split one of the blocks of concrete and revealed the bones of Geronimo, which had lain in their strange tomb for nearly three hundred years. The block containing the bones has been placed in the cathedral, but as the relics have obstinately refused to work a miracle, the title of Geronimo to be a saint has not been made good. "*Ossa venerabilis servi Dei Geronimi*," so runs the epitaph.

A plaster cast taken of the cavity shows the arms of Geronimo still bound, but in the awful struggles of suffocation his legs had broken loose.

In the seventeenth century changes were introduced which, though at first they seemed only to develop the trade, by extending the field of its operations, eventually proved its ruin. In A.D. 1601 a Flemish buccaneer named Simon Danser put his services at the disposal of the Pacha, and taught the Algerian shipwrights to build larger vessels. These were the galliase, which carried seven hundred men and three hundred rowers, and was rigged with three masts, and the galleon, which was larger still, and was decked throughout. It was clear that vessels of this size must trust mainly, if not entirely, to sails; in fact the galleon carried no rowers at all.<sup>1</sup> Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> These vessels were manned throughout by Mohammedans, the carpenter being the only Christian on board. Every Moslem to whom the Reis gave a zequin was obliged to serve for one voyage, which lasted, as a rule, from forty to fifty days. The first man to board a prize received a slave worth at least two hundred zequins. When the prize-money was divided, the Reis received forty shares, every sailor three, and every soldier one and a half.

the Powers began to adopt what may be called standing navies ; and against a fleet, or even a considerable squadron, the dashing tactics of the corsairs were of little avail. The Algerian fleet had never been a large one, or accustomed to work together. At the end of the sixteenth century it numbered only thirty-five or thirty-six galleys, and they seldom attacked more than two or three vessels at a time. Moreover, the expulsion of the last Moors from Spain, in A.D. 1610, robbed them of their last sympathisers and allies in Europe.

On the other hand, the small rowing craft which they had hitherto employed were suitable only for short dashes, and practically confined their operations to the Mediterranean. With the larger vessels, fully rigged, decked, and with a high freeboard, they were able to undertake long voyages and face the storms of the Atlantic. In A.D. 1627 the Reis Mourad penetrated as far as to Iceland, and brought back eight hundred prisoners. In A.D. 1631 he made a descent on Baltimore, in Ireland, and carried off two hundred and thirty-seven prisoners ; in A.D. 1640 another raid was made near Penzance, when about sixty were captured. There were at this time twenty-five thousand Christian slaves in Algiers alone, of whom, as is shown by a petition to the King, dated October 2, A.D. 1640, three thousand were English.

Sir Lambert Playfair, in his profoundly interesting book, *The Scourge of Christendom*, gives an account of the capture and fate of a party of these unfortunates, which, as the book is not easy to obtain, I venture to give in some detail.

On August 16, A.D. 1727, a detachment of the Irish Regiment, celebrated for its romantic zeal in the service of the Pretender, but at that time in the service of Spain, was overtaken by Algerian corsairs on its

way from Majorca to the mainland. The first Zebique they boarded, drove the Turks overboard, and hoisted the colours of the Reggimento di Hibernia, the flag of Ireland, a red cross on a white ground. Another larger vessel then bore down upon them, and, their powder being exhausted, they were compelled to surrender. The party consisted of a lieutenant-colonel, six captains, ten subs., about sixty privates, and some ladies. Amongst these was Mrs. Jones, formerly Mrs. Joseph Tichbourne of Stanfields, with her daughter, Nancy, married to Captain O'Reilly, and her two young children. The rest of the story is told by the Rev. Thomas Bolton, Chaplain to the Consulate at Algiers.

Mrs. Jones was sitting with her youngest child at the door of the house where she resided, when a Turk came up and began to importune her, giving her the choice of compliance or death. She retreated into an inner room and thence into a loft, accessible only by a ladder, which she pulled up after her. The Turk then seized the child, drew his sword, and proceeded to wound it in one arm. The mother shrieked, and he wounded it on the other arm. At last he cut off one hand and threw it at her, whereupon she seized half a broken millstone, threw it down upon the Turk, and broke his leg.

He then murdered the child, cut off its head, and discharged his pistols at the woman, but without effect. The latter watched her opportunity, and, with the other half of the millstone crushed him in such a manner as to render him insensible. She then descended, despatched him with his own sword, put her mangled child in a basket, and went and gave herself up to the Dey.

The sequel is unknown, but only one is possible.

Here is an account of the execution of a young Christian who killed his master under provocation not less terrible. "He was dragged to the place of execution over rough and pointed stones. On his arrival there he was crucified against a wall with four large nails : a red-hot iron was thrust through his cheeks to prevent him from speaking, and in this condition he was slowly burnt to death with firebrands."

Now and again an effort was made to put an end to these atrocities. In A.D. 1655, Cromwell, who knew his own mind, sent Robert Blake with a squadron to deal with the matter. Blake visited Tunis first, and after vainly endeavouring to get satisfaction from the Bey, sailed to Porto Farina, the winter quarters of the fleet. There he found the Tunisian fleet, hauled close to the shore, and strongly defended by the guns of the forts, by earthworks thrown up for the purpose, as well as by an army of several thousand horse and foot. He marked his recognition of the gravity of the occasion by having divine service performed with great solemnity on board every vessel of his squadron. Then on April 4, "very early we entered with the fleet into the harbour, and anchored before their castles, the Lord being pleased to favour us with a gentle gale off the sea, which cast all the smoke upon them, and made our work the more easy ; for after some hours' dispute we set on fire all their ships, which were nine in number, and the same favourable gale still continuing, we retreated out again into the roads."

Surely never was a heroic action described in more modest words.

Blake then sailed for Algiers, where he found things much simplified by his victory. His demands were complied with without hesitation, and all British slaves were released on payment of a moderate ransom.

Nor was this the only instance of vigorous and successful action. On August 12, A.D. 1670, Sir Thomas Allen sighted and destroyed six of the best vessels of the Algerian fleet ; a few months later, on May 8, A.D. 1671, his second-in-command, Sir Edward Spragg, drove another squadron into the harbour of Bougie and burnt it there. But such cases were rare and spasmodic, and Sir Lambert Playfair's pages are filled with the humiliating record of futile negotiations, half-hearted attacks, mean intrigues, and still meaner compliances.

At last, in A.D. 1816, a more serious effort was made to put an end to the scandal. Lord Exmouth was sent to Algiers with a sufficient fleet and a free hand. On August 25, the battle of Algiers was fought, in which the Algerian fleet was destroyed and the fortifications seriously damaged. But, from the sea, the town was impregnable, and no troops were landed to attack it on its vulnerable side. In a word, no sustained effort was made to capture or to occupy the place ; and so the demonstration ended in nothing ; and it was not until A.D. 1830 that the celebrated " Coup d'Eventail " which the Dey Husein dealt the French Consul, Deval, decided France to take final and determined action. On June 14 an army thirty-seven thousand strong was landed at Sidi Ferrouch under the command of General de Bourmont. On June 19 a decisive battle was fought at Staouéli ; on July 4 the Fort de l'Empereur was blown up by its defenders ; on the following day, July 5, Husein capitulated, the French entered Algiers, and North Africa entered on a new life of civilisation and recovery as a French colony.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LAIR OF THE CORSAIRS

SIR LAMBERT PLAYFAIR used to say that, with the exception of that from the Greek theatre at Taormina, the view from his house at El Biar was the most beautiful on the Mediterranean. The two are so different that it is not easy to compare them. There are no precipices at Algiers like those which drop from Taormina to Giardini, no wooded islands, no background of rugged mountain heights—above all, no Etna with its eternal snows and fires. In truth, Algiers is much more like Naples. There is the same wide sweep of bay, the same white town climbing the hill, the same general effects of luxuriant verdure. But even here Algiers suffers by the comparison. It is all on a smaller scale ; we miss the historic Vesuvius ; above all, we miss the lovely islands of Ischia and Capri, which hang like golden clouds on the horizon at the two extremities of the bay.

It is better to take Algiers as it is, for it is very beautiful ; perhaps more so now that the town has spread far and wide, and the snowy French villas peep through the trees of Mustapha, El Biar, and Bouzareua, than when the hills were bare, and the savage stronghold of the Turks kept the Christian world at bay.

The town lies in a bay, which sweeps round from Pointe Pescade to the north-west to Cap Matifou to the east. As we come in from the sea it is still possible to trace the outline of what remains of the Turkish town, but only by the flat roofs, the glaring whiteness,

and the apparent absence of streets. The old walls and forts and gates are gone, especially the grim fortifications of the sea front. Indeed, with the exception of a few houses near the Mole, the whole of that part of the town has been swept away to make room for the French Boulevards and open Places.

Of the Roman Icosium, never a place of much importance, no trace now remains. It is said that the Rue de la Marine follows the line of the old street, and that the Roman pillars which now line the Djama Kebira belonged to it; but even this is doubtful.

No trustworthy map or description of Turkish Algiers exists, and we are left to reconstruct it, as best we may, from chance notices in the writings of men like Cervantes, Hædo, and Venture de Paradis. To do this—in outline, at any rate—is not difficult.

The town faced due east. In shape it was an almost perfect triangle, each side measuring some half a mile in length. Its population was about fifty thousand, of whom not more than one-tenth were Turks.<sup>1</sup>

The apex of the triangle, at the top of the steep hill, was occupied by the Kasbah. If from this we draw two lines, one south-east along the Boulevard Gambetta to the Square de la République, and the other through the Boulevard Vallée to the Lycée, we have the outline of the city as the French found it in A.D. 1830.

On its two land sides it was defended by a wall, ten feet thick and thirty-five to forty feet high, strengthened with towers at irregular intervals; outside this ran a deep waterless fosse. There were no faubourgs, but, according to Venture de Paradis, there were no

<sup>1</sup> This is the estimate of Venture de Paradis, and is confirmed by Mr. Shaler.

fewer than ten thousand villas, each surrounded by a lofty wall, on the neighbouring hills.

The number of gates is given differently by various writers. Probably there were five.<sup>1</sup>

On the sea front there were two, one at the head of the Mole of Kheir-ed-Din, the other, called the Fishers' Gate, to the south, near the present Santé.

In the north wall there was only one, the Bab el Oued, or Water Gate. It stood where the present street of that name passes the Lycée. Outside this gate was the place of execution for Christians and Jews. Christians were either beheaded or strangled. The former sentence was carried out by the Turkish soldiers; the latter was executed by some passing Christian or Jew who was impressed for the service, for no Mohammedan would hang or strangle a man. Women condemned to death were drowned. Jews were burnt. In addition to this, they were compelled to wear a special dress, either black or white; they were forbidden under any circumstances to resist or resent an injury, to mount a horse, or to carry any weapon, even a stick; they had to pay double taxes, and were allowed to pass through the gates only on Wednesday and Saturday. After dark every one was obliged to carry a lighted lantern, except a Jew, who had to carry his light bare, and was punished if it went out. They were, however, allowed to buy slaves in the open market, a privilege which was refused to Christians. Outside this gate were the Christian and Jewish cemeteries.<sup>2</sup>

The Bab el Oued was protected by no fewer than four forts. Close to the waterside stood the Bordj

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Shaler says four. The doubt is about the Fisher's Gate. Perhaps this was only a postern.

<sup>2</sup> In old age the Jews often divided the bulk of their property among their heirs, and journeyed to Jerusalem in order to die and be buried there.

el Djedid, or New Fort. This, however, was never finished, or, at any rate, never armed. On the site of the modern esplanade stood the Bordj Setti Takelett, or Holy Negress, armed with thirty-four guns. The French gave it the name of the Fort des Vingt-quatre Heures. This was the scene of the martyrdom of Geronimo. Farther off, between the church of Notre Dame d'Afrique and the sea, stood the Fort des Anglais, armed with twenty-two guns. On Pointe Pescade stood the fourth, known as the Castle of Barbarossa, and armed with twenty-one guns.

By the Bab el Oued entered the only thoroughfare of the town ; it followed roughly the line of the present Rues Bab el Oued and Bab Azoun. It was called the Souk el Kebir, or Great Market, from the stalls with which it was lined. Although it was the largest and most important highway in all Algiers, it was nowhere more than ten feet wide.

This road left the town by the Bab Azoun, or Gate of Weeping, which stood on the site of the present Place de la République. This was the place of execution for Turks and natives ; from each side projected horrible hooks of iron on which the worst offenders were impaled and left to die by inches.<sup>1</sup> This gate was protected by the Fort Bab Azoun, and another which stood on Cap Matifou, armed with twenty-two guns. Close to this gate and just inside the wall, stood a Kouba of great sanctity—the tomb of Sidi Dedé Weli, the marabout who foretold, and, it was believed, caused, the great tempest which destroyed the Spanish fleet in A.D. 1541, and saved Algiers from Doria and the Emperor Charles V.

This mosque, with that of Sidi Abd el Kader which

<sup>1</sup> In 1830 the French found the heads and bodies of many Europeans impaled on this gate.

stood hard by outside the wall, and that of Sidi Abd er Rahman, were places of sanctuary for criminals.

Higher up the hill, where the wall joined the Kasbah, was the last of the gates, the Bab el Djedid, or New Gate, by which the French entered on July 5, 1830.

This gate was originally protected by two forts, but one of them, the Fort de l'Etoile, had been blown up by a slave, and no longer existed in A.D. 1830. The other was the most important of all, and was, in fact, the key of Algiers. This was the Fort de l'Empereur, begun by Charles V. in A.D. 1541, and completed by Hassan Pacha eight years later. It was armed with seventy-seven guns, and stood a little to the south-west of the Kasbah. Its capture by the French rendered the town untenable and was the signal for its surrender.

The impregnable fortifications, armed with two hundred and fourteen guns, which protected the sea front, have been entirely destroyed, or lie buried, like the houses of the Baglione at Perugia, under the rampes and quays of the great Boulevard de la République, which now stretches from the Square de la République to the Place du Gouvernement.<sup>1</sup>

About midway between the Bab Azoun and the Bab el Oued, the shore bends forward into a point, off which, at a distance of some two or three hundred yards, lies the Rock or Peñon, which in A.D. 1509 Pedro Navarro fortified for the Spaniards to overawe the town. It is now the only remaining one of the islands which gave Algiers its name. Twenty years later Kheir-ed-Din took it, and with the materials of the forts which he destroyed, built the mole which con-

<sup>1</sup> This immense work was carried out in A.D. 1860-66 by Sir Morton Peto.

nects the island with the shore. To the north the rock projects only a little way beyond the mole. At its southern extremity a second mole was constructed, stretching towards the shore, thus forming a tiny harbour, capable of sheltering about fifty vessels. It is hard to believe that this insignificant little nook was once the famous lair of the terrible corsairs. Now it is only the starting-point of the *Jetée du Nord* of the great French harbour.

Kheir-ed-Din left but little of the Spanish work standing. A couple of handsome gateways, with coats of arms over them, and probably the core of the massive bastion on which, in A.D. 1544, Hassan Pacha built the lighthouse, are all that now remains of the "*Epine plantée au cœur des Algériens.*" The fine Arab Gate of the Lions is of white marble and richly coloured. It belonged to the *Bordj Ras-el-Moul*. The house of the Reis is now occupied by the admiral ; adjoining it is a pretty little marble fountain. The Turkish fortifications of the *Peñon* mounted one hundred and eighty-nine guns.

The centre of French life in Algiers is the *Place du Gouvernement*. Its construction involved the removal of the finest of the sixty mosques in Algiers, and threatened the existence of another.

The destroyed *Mosque es Saida*, which stood on the site of the present *Hôtel de la Régence*, replaced, according to tradition, the old Christian church of *Icosium*. It is said that the seventy-two white marble columns with which it was adorned came either from the church or from the town. That the pillars, which now form the arcade of the Great Mosque, are Roman is certain ; an inscription on one of them to *Lucius Cœcilius Rufus*, son of *Argilis*, puts this beyond doubt ; but, according to *Venture de Paradis*, they were

brought from Genoa ; and as he wrote on the spot soon after the mosque was erected, this is probably the truth.

The Djama Djedid was also doomed, as its removal was necessary to the completion of the Place. Happily it was saved by the remonstrances of Colonel Lemer cier, and the symmetry of the great Place was sacrificed instead. The Mirhab of the Mosque es Saida was brought to it.

Adjoining the Place, on the west, and between it and the mosque which now forms the cathedral, was another group of buildings which well deserved to be spared. This was the Palace of the Dey, Dar es Sultan, known as the Djenina or Garden. It was here that Selim et Teumi was strangled in his bath by Baba Aroudj, and it was the seat of government until A.D. 1816, when the last Dey but one, Ali Khodja, fled from his Janissaries and placed himself and his treasures under the protection of the Berber soldiers in the stronger and safer quarters of the Kasbah. The entrance was marked with a flagstaff bearing a golden apple. In front of it was a little open space—the only one in all Algiers—about twenty-five yards square, and adorned with a marble fountain. One pavilion has been spared ; it was known as the “Dar bent es Sultan,” the house of the daughter of the Dey. It is now the archbishop’s palace. If the rest was as beautiful as this fragment, the loss is indeed great. The palace occupied the whole of the space now surrounded by the Rues du Divan, Bruce, Djenina, and Bab el Oued.

Of life in Algiers, at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, a curiously and unexpectedly pleasant picture is drawn by those who knew it. The Turkish garrison was very small, num-

bering less than two thousand men, and the fleet which flouted the world was insignificant. In March 1825 it consisted of only fourteen vessels, of all ratings, carrying 350 guns. There were three frigates, of 62, 50, and 40 guns respectively; two corvettes, 45 and 36 guns; two brigs, 18 and 16 guns; five schooners, 24, 14, and 14 guns, and two unarmed; one polacca, 20 guns; and one zebeque, 10 guns. The captains knew little or nothing of navigation, and were obliged to carry Christian or other slaves, to sail their ships for them. In the town itself the life and property of the Turks—that is, of those who took part in political life—were very insecure, but great wealth accumulated in the hands of the non-political natives, where it was perfectly safe. Nor was the position of women so hard as is often thought; the property of heiresses was secured to them after marriage, and with regard to their seclusion, “they are,” says Mr. Shaler, “less slaves to their husbands than to custom and long-received notions of propriety.” After the abandonment of galleys in the seventeenth century and of private cruising in 1816, the number of slaves decreased and their condition became more bearable. Ransom was more easy, and they were often able to make money for themselves—some made a great deal—and purchase their own freedom. Of the town itself, we are assured that, except for casual emeutes on the occasion of the murder of a Dey—and this was usually arranged for a Monday morning, at the close of the Divan—“there is no city in the world where there is a more vigilant police, or where there is better security for life or property.” Doubtless, according to our ideas, the streets were filthy, but the houses, numbering from eight to ten thousand, were whitewashed every year, and the streets were provided with a hundred and fifty public

fountains, each with a metal cup attached. The rules for drawing water were simple and precise ; Turks took precedence of all comers ; Christians and natives filled their vessels in turn ; Jews had to wait until the place was absolutely free.

The Arab town, when once you find your way into it from the Rue Randon, is a perpetual delight, full of picturesque corners, with lights and shadows which enchant the eye and are the despair of the painter. It is a maze of winding and intricate streets, without the slightest effort at directness or symmetry of arrangement ; so steep that, where not actually stairs, they are for the most part divided into the long sloping steps which the Italians call *cordonata*, and so narrow as to be often impassable for anything larger than a mule—no wheeled vehicle was ever seen in Algiers before the French came. Often they are completely arched over ; even where this is not the case, the windowless houses project forward, step by step, on wooden struts until the upper stories nearly touch. The houses are either covered with the eternal white-wash, or are painted blue ; the doorways are frequently beautifully carved, and, in the case of mosques, zaouias, hammams, and other buildings of a more or less sacred character, they are richly, or gaudily, painted with the favourite Moslem colours, red and green. The doors open into delightfully tiled entrance halls or skiffa. Beyond these it is of course impossible to penetrate without special invitation. In general arrangement they are all alike, square, built round an oust,<sup>1</sup> or little court like a Spanish *patio*. They have flat roofs, and no windows, or only small, heavily barred openings high up in the wall. In the heat of summer, a curtain is drawn over the open *patio*.

<sup>1</sup> The waist or middle.



RUE DE LA KASBAH, ALGIERS

1891  
1892

Several of the finest houses have been occupied by the French and are open to inspection. Chief amongst these is the governor's winter palace, Dar Hassan Pacha. It is gaudy and may have been beautiful, but the extensive alterations and additions made by the French have robbed it of much of its charm and interest. Close by is the palace of the archbishop already mentioned.

Most perfect and beautiful of all is the public library, installed in the private house of Mustapha-Pacha, who built it in A.D. 1779, and was murdered in A.D. 1805. The skiffa is covered with Delft tiles, signed "J.V.M." (J. van Maak); passing through it we turn to the left into the *oust*, or *patio*; it is a square court surrounded by two stories of horseshoe arches, decorated with tiles, and resting on slender spiral columns of marble. Between the columns of the upper storey runs a balustrade of carved cedar wood; the dwelling-rooms are sacrificed to the books. In the centre of the *patio* is a graceful marble fountain, its basin filled with bamboos, and bananas stand in the four corners. To sit there in the shade, reading, on a hot day, with the sun blazing down upon dazzling colours of wood, marble, and tiles, and filling the air with vibrating light; to feel the coolness of the little breeze which makes the bamboos tremble and the water drip outside the basin, is as near the perfection of luxurious ease as a student can desire.

Of the original Kasbah little remains. It was begun by the one Barbarossa and finished by the other, to take the place of the ancient Berber fortress. It did not become a royal residence until A.D. 1816, when Ali Khodja took sanctuary there, and stood a siege by his own troops. Ultimately they were routed and massacred, but the Dey did not dare to risk a return

to the lower town, so he and his successor remained at the Kasbah until finally driven out by the French.

A broad road has been driven through the fortress, entirely destroying its original character ; on passing through the strong walls there is a disused mosque, now a magazine, on one side of the road and an ancient gateway on the other. The private apartments of the Dey surround a court, in the middle of which is a fountain ; amongst them a little room, hardly more than a recess, is shown as the scene of the " Blow with the Fan " ; the apartments are handsome, but do not require special notice. Some of the officers are quartered in fine old houses, but these are, of course, private. Not much else of the old fort has been left.

The mosques are not remarkably fine or interesting. Three of them, however, deserve notice as being good specimens of the three different types of such buildings which we find in North Africa.

The Djama Kebira, or Great Mosque, stands close to the sea, between the modern Boulevard de France and the ancient Rue de la Marine, at the head of the jetty of Kheir-ed-din. It is of the ordinary type of Arab mosques, built for the Malekite rite, and dates from the tenth or eleventh century. A fine minaret was added in A.D. 1324 by Abou Tachefin, King of Tlemçen. Its exterior was quite plain, but in A.D. 1837 the French adorned the side towards the Rue de la Marine with a handsome arcade of horseshoe arches resting upon the pillars brought from the Djama-es-Saida.

The interior is divided into eleven aisles by heavy whitewashed arcades of horseshoe arches resting upon square piers. This arrangement, poor and clumsy, reminds us that the great builders of North Africa and





ZAOUIA OF SIDI ABD-ER-RAHMAN, ALGIERS

Spain were not the Arabs, but the Moors or Berbers ; and that even they very seldom carved a column to beautify the houses of God. If they could not take them from some Roman ruin they did without them.

The mirhab and the cupboards for the sacred books are fine and the mimbar old and quaint : an inscription upon it gives the date A.H. 409—that is, A.D. 1018. The adjoining arches are scalloped, but it may be doubted whether this is an improvement.

Surrounded on three sides by the aisles of the mosque, is the open court, green and shady with trees, and beautified with a lovely fountain for ablutions. This, as usual, consists of a little dome resting on slender pillars and is bright with tiles. Seen from the gloomy shadows of the mosque, the effect of this light and shade, green leaf of trees and shimmer of marble and burnished tiles, is singularly beautiful, and we leave the mosque with a pleasant recollection of quiet and coolness and of that peculiar solemnity which the low roofs and numberless aisles never fail to give.

High up the hill, where its almost precipitous side seems to offer the least possible foothold for a building, stands, or rather hangs, the little mosque and zaouia of Sidi Abd-er-Rahman et Tsalibi. The marabout round whose grave the buildings have gathered lived in the first half of the fourteenth century, and belonged to the Tsaliba tribe, which dominated the Metidja before the coming of the Turks. In spite of this, the fame of his learning and holiness was so great that he has retained his hold on the affection of the people, Turks and natives, and is still revered as the patron saint of Algiers. Whenever a corsair left the harbour below, he saluted first the Dar es Sultan and then this mosque, each with three guns. The mosque was rebuilt by the Turkish invaders in A.D. 1696. It is an

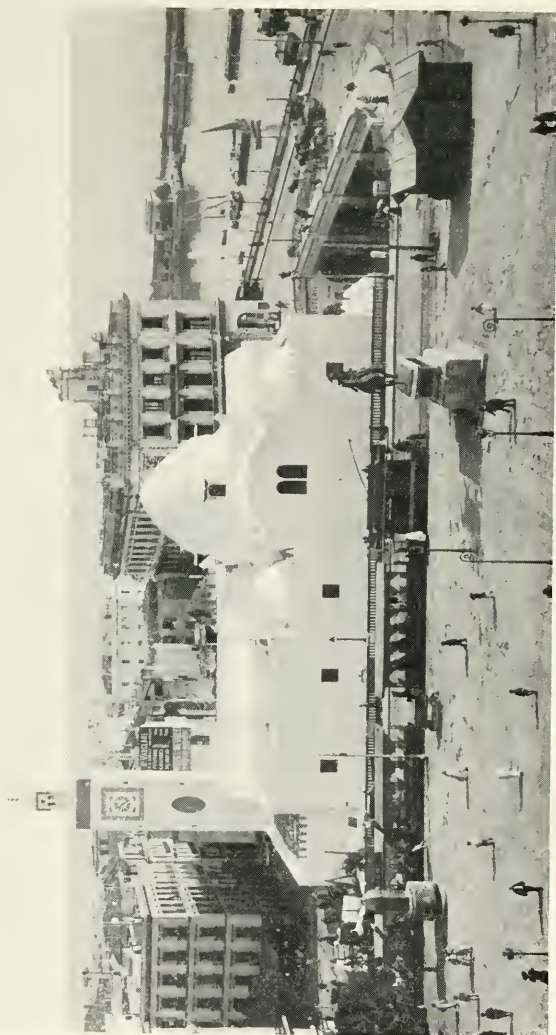
exquisite little specimen of a style of mosque of which the largest and most perfect example is that of the Djama Sidi Sahab at Kairouan.

Clinging to the face of the rock, the tiny buildings stand, literally one above another. Steep narrow passages or flights of steps lead from one to the other. Highest of all stands the mosque, with a graceful minaret divided into stages of pillared arcades by bands of burnished tiles. Lower down is the Kouba, where the saint sleeps under his dome. A gaudily draped catafalque, surrounded by a beautiful screen of carved cedar-wood, covers his resting-place. All round stand or hang votive offerings of flags, chandeliers, ostrich eggs, and clocks in barbarous and most incongruous profusion. All is bizarre and tawdry, but, as is always the case in the wonderful light, not inharmonious or unpleasant.

Other buildings, but of no special interest, are those belonging to the zaouia, and the little house of the *oukil* or guardian. Amongst them are some beautiful trees, tiny scraps of garden and equally tiny cemeteries, where the last Bey of Constantine, Ahmed,<sup>1</sup> his wives, and others equally favoured, lie at rest. It is pleasant indeed to linger for a time in this abode of ancient peace, to look upwards at the minaret, its outline dim in the glorious light, or down, through the trees of the Jardin Marengo, to the purple sea beyond.

Very different from either of these, and interesting on account of the difference rather than for itself, is the new mosque, the Djama Djedid, or, as it is now called, from the fish market which surrounds it, the "Mosquée de la Pecherie." It was built in A.D. 1660 by the Turkish invaders for their worship according

<sup>1</sup> Ahmed Pacha died in A.D. 1850.



DJAMA DJEDID, ALGIERS

1871  
1872

to the Hanefite rite ; for Turks, Arabs, and Berbers differ almost as much in religion as in race.

Its position is remarkable and suggestive, for it stands on the edge of the new Place du Gouvernement, between the Djama Kebira of the Arabs on one side, and Marochetti's theatrical statue of the Duc d'Orléans on the other—the last three conquerors of Africa, Arab, Turkish, and French. In itself it is a plain, spacious, unpretentious building enough, which, though it lacks the dignity of the mosques of Constantinople or Cairo, and especially their light and graceful minarets, belongs entirely to the Eastern rather than to the Western type of building.

In form it is a Latin cross, crowned with a central dome surrounded by four smaller ones. Its shape has given rise to the fable that its architect was a Christian slave, who was crucified for thus daring to stamp the symbol of his faith on a Mohammedan mosque. A somewhat similar story attaches to certain rose windows in France and elsewhere, that they were the work of a pupil who was murdered through the jealousy of his master.

Except for the vulgar decoration of the dome, the interior is very plain, and reminds us more of a church than of a mosque—a lofty nave, choir, and transepts, with a plain barrel vault carried by semicircular arches resting on square piers. Round the building, just above the arches, runs a little wooden triforium ; from the vault hang handsome chandeliers, and in each of the aisles is a wooden gallery. The mimbar, instead of being a flight of steps with standing-room at the top, placed against the wall by the side of the mirhab, stands under the central dome, and the steps, with a door at the bottom and a canopied landing at the top, lead to the large wooden platform from which the

service is conducted. The mosque possesses one great treasure, the copy of the Koran presented to the Pacha by the Sultan of Constantinople.

Such was Algiers in time past, under Turkish rule ; and such is it now.

## PART II



## CHAPTER I

### ROKNIA AND ITS DOLMENS

THE geography of North Africa, that great island between the seas of sand and water, though confused and intricate in detail, is simple enough in general outline.

From the south of Morocco the vast range of the Atlas Mountains runs north-east to the Gap of the Hodna. Beyond the Gap, under the name of the Aures, the mountains run almost due east to the frontier of Tunis, where they spread out to the north and south, and slope towards the sea. Along the sea-coast to the north runs a parallel range known to the west of Algiers by the name of the Ouarsenis, and to the east between Algiers and Constantine as the Djurdjura or Mountains of Great and Little Kabylia. Between these ranges and those of the Atlas lie high upland plateaux or steppes, with a sufficiency of rainfall to make them fertile, where the water is stored, and with rivers, most of them dry in summer, which either find their way through the mountains, to be swallowed up in the sea or sand, or are lost in the great salt shallows or swamps, known as Chotts.

“A land of sand and ruin and gold,”

thus Swinburne describes North Africa.

Sand indeed there is—sand that seems to stretch out into infinity ; ruins, too, the ruins of three great civilisations which have passed away ; gold also ; though it is no material gold, or material wealth,

of which at present North Africa is full. Rather is it the gold of sunsets, the glory of the golden haze over the desert, and the yellow sand, gleaming in the sunshine.

North Africa is a land of tombs also ; these too are mostly ruins. Up and down the length and breadth of the land they are scattered. Much of the history of the different peoples who have successively occupied this coveted country may be traced in them ; generally, the story of their race and stage of development ; the story of their religions also—a varied one, for many religions have celebrated their rites in North Africa.

Sometimes the story is written in grand and even noble characters, sometimes in rude and simple ones. Many tombs are revered as shrines ; some of these are ancient, such as the tomb of Sidi Okba, the great Arab saint ; many are modern, such as the last white Kouba, glistening in the sunshine on a neighbouring hill, and built over the grave of some marabout. Of the identity of the occupants of some of the most splendid tombs there is no actual certainty ; the very race of others has not as yet been definitely determined, for the tombs are prehistoric.

Oldest among these sepulchres are the dolmens.

In the Department of Constantine these are very numerous. M. Feraud speaks of the dolmens near the springs of the Bou Merzoug, 35 kilometres south of Constantine or Cirta. Of these the largest are used as shelters by the shepherds, who call them El R'oul, the ghouls, and El R'oulat, the ogres or vampires ; here, they say, once lived a race of pagans whose wickedness drew down the anger of God upon them. As a punishment He caused a hailstorm of great stones to fall. And the country being flat and open, the R'oul had no roof but the sky, so they made houses of

stone for themselves as a protection from the terrible downpour.

There are dolmens also at Dougga. These, though much fewer in number than those of Roknia, of which I shall speak presently, are larger; the cap stone of one measures 13 feet in length and 6 feet across.

We climbed the steep side of the mountain in search of them, and disappeared for so long that our French driver, who was waiting below, became anxious and sent a boy to look for us. He told us afterwards that it was not safe to wander about upon the mountains unarmed. However, the only natives we had met had been quite friendly and harmless—a man who stood and stared speechlessly at us, as we were resting for a few minutes after our climb, a small boy, and a pretty little girl.

The latter, who was about six years old, quite seriously offered me her hand, over some of the most difficult bits of the descent. Greatly amused, I took it to please her, and found it as strong and firm as that of a woman, while her bare feet over the slippery stones were sure as a young antelope's.

But whether the dangers were real or only imaginary, we felt that we were well repaid for the adventure.

The tombs stand upon a small plateau over which towers darkly a rocky height. Below, bathed in the sunlight, and surrounded by mountains, lies the beautiful Capitol of Thugga, the arch of Bab er Roumia, and lower still the wonderful Libyan-Punic tomb of Ataban.<sup>1</sup> Upon one side stretches the Roman circus; upon the other, deep down at the foot of the mountain and winding round it like a white ribbon, the road leading to Kef, and on to Tebessa.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 344.

Upon the plateau, and all around, the rocks are split and scattered on the ground, as by some great upheaval ; the huge stones of the tombs are mingled with them, often in an almost indistinguishable mass. Some, however, of the dolmens remain standing amidst a wilderness of golden gorse and dry grass. Inexpressibly grand and solemn is this cemetery of an ancient people whose very existence had probably been forgotten long before the Romans came to North Africa ; though the Arabs say of the tombs, as they do of everything which they cannot understand, that they are Roman, or else that they were erected by pagans.

Perhaps of all the sepulchres in North Africa the dolmens awaken the greatest interest and appeal most strongly to the imagination. One of the most wonderful of these prehistoric cities of the dead is at Roknia.

It lies high up on the slopes of the mountains which shelter Hammam Meskoutine from the sea. For six miles you follow the modern French road winding upwards from the Accursed Baths. Then comes a short distance of heavy walking, for the latter part of the journey must be made on foot. Turning to the left, you make your way by a rough footpath, across some fields.

This part of the country is fertile and beautiful, and the land is under cultivation. An Arab is ploughing with a couple of oxen. With one hand he holds the plough, in the other he carries a long stick with which to guide the animals. The plough is of the most simple and primitive description ; just a straight up-turned pole, with a rude iron shoe at the end, and a stay of about a foot long upon either side of it.

Slowly and laboriously man and oxen struggle over



A TOMB AT ROKNIA



DOLMENS, ROKNIA



the heavy ground. It is hard work, and a trial of patience in the teeth of a cutting wind. The progress is very slow ; watching it, one thinks surely the summer will be here before the work is finished. In this country, with these people, time can have no meaning, be of no importance.

Time, indeed, counted by days, or months, or even by years, does seem as nothing when one tries to realise the forty centuries that have passed since the dead were laid to rest in the mighty cemetery stretching from the plateau on which we stand, down the steep side of the mountain, and on to the valley below. Enclosing the place in solemn grandeur are the ranges of the Djebel Debar and the Djebel Gherar. Their great rounded summits rise up one above another, green and purple and blue as they come nearer, or recede farther from the eye. Some of their higher peaks are still covered with snow. The sky is lowering and sunless ; dark clouds reach down to touch the mountains. A silence intense, and almost dreadful, broods over the place where these primitive people lie, wrapt in the mystery of death.

An Arab boy in a brown striped gandoura, made of goat's or camel's hair, which reaches to his knees, leaving his legs bare, is keeping goats. He is a handsome lad, with olive skin, and long almond-shaped, wide-open eyes. There is an air of proud detachment and independence in the poise of his head. He stares at us with a look that is a mixture of resentment and shy friendliness. The European is still a matter of curiosity to him. His home is in the mountains ; he knows no language but Arabic. But as most of the settlers in the country have learned its language, the Frenchman who had showed us the way was able to interpret. Local stories are always interesting,

sometimes even throwing valuable light upon mysteries. We questioned the boy.

But the result was disappointing. All his life he had walked about amongst these mountains. Ever since he was old enough he had been tending goats. The tombs are such familiar objects that it has never occurred to him to speculate or even wonder about them. They are nothing to marvel at. Perhaps, he suggests, there was an ancient town here ; the stones may have been set up in time of battle as a shelter from attack, or places to shoot from ; and this is all.

During that long period of four thousand years oral tradition seems to have been lost ; no one was left, perhaps, to hand down either tradition or legend. The descendants of these prehistoric people have been swept away from this part of the country. Authorities differ even as to their identity. They are said to have been troglodyte Libyans or Berbers, and ancestors of the Kabyles and Chaouiah. But the real history of the dead at Roknia will remain perhaps for ever a mystery. The graveyard is the only record of their existence.<sup>1</sup>

And what a wonderful graveyard it is. The tombs, about twelve hundred in number, lie close together. Some have fallen, and are almost hidden by the thick bushes which cover the ground. Most of them have been disturbed for examination, or rifled in search of treasure. Many, however, are still standing uninjured, four great stones forming a chamber, and

<sup>1</sup> The difference of type amongst the skulls between those of a fair and of a dark people is said to be a proof not of a different race, but of the different altitudes at which tribes of the same Libyans lived.

Another authority says that the skulls found in the tombs belong to the long (dolicho-pentagonal) Arian type, some to the negroes or a mixed type, and the majority to Libyans or Kabyles. But the problem is at present quite unsolved.

a fifth a cover. Originally they were buried beneath a tumulus, a heaped-up mass of earth with a base of stones. But time has gradually changed this. Now all that remains is the actual dolmen or funeral chamber, and in some cases the circle of stones which formed the outline of the tumulus. The tombs, with the exception of one which is orientated from south to north, are placed obliquely from south-west to north-east, so that the angles of the chamber nearly correspond with the cardinal points. Occasionally we find vaults which have been carefully hollowed out of the rock, but these are rare, and it is doubtful whether they are of the same age as the dolmens. The bracelets and other ornaments discovered in the tombs, as well as the land shells found there, are said by the various French authorities who have examined them<sup>1</sup> to prove that they belong to the period of the bronze age of Denmark, England, Hungary, and Etruria.<sup>2</sup> Here, for the first time in dolmens, silver-gilt ornaments have been found. This points, it is thought, to the conclusion that the tribes who used this burial place, although themselves a pastoral people, were in communication with some more civilised race. Perhaps they had commercial and political relations with Egypt and Nigeria. The skull of an Egyptian woman has been found in a dolmen of Roknia which Dr. Prunar Bey says could belong to no other period than the seventeenth or eighteenth dynasty, or about 1500 years B.C.

All that has been gathered together concerning the life and condition of the people buried at Roknia amounts to very little ; but most of it is interesting,

<sup>1</sup> General Faidherbe, M. Rouyer, M. Bourguignat.

<sup>2</sup> I believe that up to the present no certain trace of a bronze age has been found in North Africa.

some of it touching. Even in those primitive days there were different classes of rich and poor, governors and governed, powerful and humble. This has been proved by the nature of the burials. The larger tombs, in which the most powerful amongst the people were buried, are invariably at the bottom of the hill, and were found by General Faidherbe to contain only one, or at the most two bodies. The jewellery and vases discovered in these graves were finer than those in the smaller ones; the latter, perhaps from motives of economy, held three or four or even more bodies. The Kabyles or Berbers<sup>1</sup> are said to have been buried half-way up the side of the hill, and the negroes upon the summit. The dead were always placed upon their backs, with the arms crossed and the legs drawn up. When two bodies are found in the same grave, they are placed opposite to each other.

Ceramic art was in its earliest infancy amongst these people, but some of the vases discovered in the Roknia dolmens are of a beautiful shape, and no two have ever been found alike.<sup>2</sup> They are rudely fashioned by hand; the mark of the potter's fingers is often plainly visible. They have been slightly baked either in the fire or in the sun.<sup>3</sup> The presence of pottery in the graves shows that these tribes

<sup>1</sup> Natives of North Africa, so called by the Arabs. The Romans called them Numidians, Libyans, and Moors.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the specimens are at present, I believe, in the Museum at St. Germain.

<sup>3</sup> Probably in much the same way as the native pottery made by the Bedouins is to this day. Specimens of this work are now rather difficult to procure. The writers possess a few, some little vases and a model of a camel about nine inches in height. The latter is roughly but well modelled, except that the feet of the animal are absurdly large in proportion to the rest of the body. These specimens, made of yellow clay, and painted with a rude design in black and red, are glazed. The little earthen censers used by the natives are of unglazed pottery.

had some faith in a future life. They had contained food which was provided for the sustenance of the departed in another world. The fact that the orientation of the tombs is identical with that adopted by the Arians is held as proof that these people were in touch with an Arian religion.

Human nature is the same in essentials, whether its development is that of the twentieth century or only that of the bronze or iron age. It loves, and suffers, and dies. Its love and its suffering are only questions of degree. In every age the stage of development of a people or an individual can be gauged by the attitude adopted towards women; in some measure we are able to apply this test to the prehistoric people of Roknia.

Their women were in a state of complete subjection, being mere beasts of burden. The hope—a childish one, doubtless, but still a hope—of a future life which was held by the men was denied to the women. In no case, says General Faidherbe, who carefully examined the graves, were any vases found in the tomb of a woman. When a man and woman were buried together, the vase was invariably placed near the head of the man.

Yet these women, doubtless, were capable of great love and self-sacrifice. In one case General Faidherbe found what he considered evidence of a tragedy of human sorrow and sacrifice. In most of the graves in which women were buried he found ornaments, rings and bracelets of bronze and occasionally silver-gilt, bent and broken. But the ornaments were extremely simple, and the women thus honoured were generally of full or advanced age. In one of the largest tombs, however, he discovered the bodies of two young girls, and here the ornaments, which were

of silver-gilt, were larger and finer than those found in any other tomb. They also had been destroyed. This work of destruction General Faidherbe thinks had probably been done by the mother, who, rather than run the risk of her jewellery going to any one else, had, at the death of her children, herself destroyed it. This, he says, was no small thing to do—no slight evidence of human love and grief. For the jewellery, worthless as it seems to us, must have meant a great deal to the owners of it. These bracelets probably were the only ones of their kind in the tribe. They must have been obtained with great difficulty; and could hardly be replaced.

These are only slight glimpses into the lives of the prehistoric people buried at Roknia. Some of the theories built upon them may seem to rest upon an insufficient foundation, and the ideas to be too fanciful. What is really certain amounts to very little. The rest, in imagination, we may fill up for ourselves, as we wander about in the solitude and silence of this wonderful graveyard.

Even the appearance and formation of the surface of the earth has suffered change since these dead were laid to rest. Now the ground is rough and dry and stony. Once it was cultivated and fertile. The plateau was pasture land; forests covered the flank of the mountains. The climate, too, has altered. Instead of there being, as at present, only about fifty days of rain, then there were one hundred and fifty, while the temperature never sank below 50°. Thus the extreme fertility of this part of the country has been accounted for.

Here was once a colossal crater caused by furious internal heat; boiling springs came bursting up to the surface; cones were deposited like those still existing at

Hamman Meskoutine, and described in the following chapter. The springs at Roknia must have been one of the most wonderful sights of the world. For the space of about three miles the earth would have been covered with clouds of dense steam ; jets of boiling water spurted up into the air. When those melancholy little funeral processions wound their way up the side of the mountain, the mourners were going to place their dead under the protection of some infernal god, whose power and presence, as they supposed, were manifested in this terrible manner. As the sound of their wailing floated down the side of the awful mountain, the hearts of the sorrowing people must have been filled with the mystery and the terror of unexplained forces.

The cooling of the internal heat at Roknia had already begun when the interments took place ; the tribes chose for the graves those parts of the ground where the heat was less tremendous, and, in consequence, where it was possible to bury. But in many cases, General Faidherbe and others who have examined the tombs found that the corpses were calcined by the action of the subterranean fire. The earth in the graves also has the appearance of being burnt.

The internal fires must have cooled, and the boiling springs have ceased to rise, long before the coming of any historic people to Roknia ; there is not the slightest sign that any baths or buildings were erected there by the Romans. The composition of the stones forming the dolmens is identical with that of the cones at Hammam Meskoutine.

It is all such a very old story, reaching far back into the childhood of the world ; one is filled with awe and wonder as one walks about amongst the tombs

upon the mountain-side at Roknia. There is an infinite pathos in the rough, unhewn stones ; something of weirdness too, almost, it would seem, of cruelty. The dark clouds descending upon the mountains, the wind sweeping over them, the pitiless desolation of the whole scene, are in keeping. So also is the bitter cry of a goat, which fills the air as we return once more to the road. Its legs are tied ; an Arab is carrying it in front of the saddle upon his mule. It is going to die, a sacrifice at the great Moslem feast that is close at hand. Instinct fills it, perhaps, with apprehension. Its head, with piteous eyes, is continually turned back in the direction of the flock from which it has been taken. The terrified cry haunts you, and seems to be going on still, long after the actual sound in your ears has ceased.

Yet this surely is only one side of the picture. The burial-place of these primitive people may be wrapped in gloom and mystery and desolation ; but there must have been something in their lives of happiness and simple content. At least so one thinks, upon another day when the sun is shining, causing wonderful lights and shadows to pass over the mountains, and the silence is a smiling and joyous one. The sky overhead is deep blue ; as you stand amongst the tombs, the river, the Oued bou Hamden, which is blue also, can be seen like a blue thread, winding through the valley below. Above and around upon every side rise the mountains, range upon range, in perfect panorama, green, and covered with shrubs ; or purple and blue as they become more distant.

In the valley, close to the banks of the river, is a little Arab village, each hut surrounded by its hedge of prickly pear. A dog barks ; a woman comes out and spreads a red garment upon the ground ;

there is a flutter of brightly clad children amongst the bushes near the enclosure. Over the mountain upon the other side of the valley some goats are wending their way, and a little grey cow or two, with thick neck, and pretty head like those of the Channel Islands. Presently a great eagle appears upon the sky-line, and sails slowly over the rocky crags and across the valley, which for the moment it seems to dominate. Nearer and nearer he comes, searching the country below with his far-seeing eyes, until he is almost over our heads. A great bird—from tip to tip of his beautiful outstretched pinions, must be a stretch of eight feet or more ; his flight feathers are divided and serrated so that the blue of the sky is visible between them. On he goes ; resting now and then on motionless wings ; king of the scene—Jove's own bird scornfully regarding, so it seems, mere man, as an intruder into this his kingdom, then, sailing on again, down into the valley over the distant crags and the distant mountain, until he is lost to sight.

The Arab boy with his goats has wandered away, the little grey cows have passed by and disappeared. We, too, turn regretfully to leave. Solitude broods once more over the scene, where the prehistoric tombs lie wrapped in the quiet solemnity of death.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BATHS OF THE ACCURSED

A GREEN valley, surrounded by mountains ; to the north the Djebal Debar, to the north-east and south-east Addi and Mahouna, and to the west the rugged peaks of the Taga, Hammam Meskoutine lies like a gem in a beautiful setting. No greater contrast could be imagined than that between the physical features of this region and those of the Ziban and the Sahara, south of the Aures Mountains. In the one, olive trees cover the hills and abound in the valley ; in the other scattered and isolated oases of palm trees are set in the midst of a sandy plain. In the one the earth is exceedingly fruitful, and brings forth in plenty, oil, and wine, and corn ; in the other the earth is barren, except in the oases ; while there is a continual struggle to eke out a bare existence. Hammam Meskoutine is blessed with an abundance of moisture, hence its wonderful fertility. The valley is full of streams. There is always the pleasant, soothing sound of running water ; its music is never silent. Water has been in past ages, and still is, the spirit and creative power of Hammam Meskoutine.

When the internal fires which had made Roknia a vast crater were extinguished, and the water ceased to rise to the surface, other powerful sources burst forth, making their appearance at Hammam Meskoutine, and the same sequence of events was repeated. At first the subterranean water rose high

into the air with tremendous force, leaving as it fell to the ground a circular deposit of carbonate of lime. Upon the first circle another was formed; then another, and another, until presently a cone grew up. Thus gradually the water choked up its own outlet. There are hundreds of these cones at Meskoutine, strange dead grey objects; for in process of time the creamy white mass of lime becomes discoloured and assumes a burnt-out appearance. Many of the cones are quite small, and lie in groups close together. Others are about forty feet in height. Sometimes the water found a crack in the rock and issued in long streams in all directions. The deposit gradually closed up the outlet, leaving a narrow furrow or channel stretching along the whole length of the mound which it had built up, and the formation took the form of a hog's back.

The spectacle must have been marvellous. To the primitive mind volcanic phenomena were always looked upon as a manifestation of supernatural life. So the terrified natives called the boiling waters of Meskoutine "The Baths of the Accursed," and attributed their existence to King Suleyman, who was accredited by the ancients with magical powers. This wonderful King, it is said, made himself baths all over the world. And the mysterious baths at Meskoutine were put under the charge of djinn who were blind and deaf and dumb, in order that they might remain in ignorance of the magical work going on; that they might see nothing, hear nothing, and repeat nothing. In course of time the great magician, King Suleyman, died, and matters then became complicated, because it was impossible to make these afflicted djinn understand what had happened. So they continued to carry out the original orders, and have gone on

heating the furnaces, and keeping the water boiling ever since.

One of the largest and tallest groups of cones has a special legend attached to it. A very rich and powerful Arab, it is said, called Ali, belonging to the tribe of Beni Kalifa, originating from Mecca, had a beautiful sister called Ourida. So beautiful was she that he decided to marry her himself, rather than let any one else do so, in spite of the prohibition of such unions by the Mohammedan law. The wedding festivities were of the greatest magnificence; camels came laden with presents; and the guests were very numerous. All went well until the moment when the priest Abdallah was in the act of uniting the couple. Then suddenly a terrible cataclysm of nature took place. The sun ceased to shine, and a flash of lightning cleft the sky. Fire burst from the depths of the earth, the rivers rose out of their beds, and profound darkness reigned.

Next morning when the sun rose the tribe of Beni Kalifa was no more. But Ali, his sister Ourida, the priest, and all the guests remained standing—petrified pillars, like Lot's wife, a warning and example to all ages.<sup>1</sup>

Of the Romans who spread themselves all over North Africa, there are, as one would expect, traces at Meskou-tine. They had already an important town close by at Tibilis, now called Announa, and a prosperous settlement at Guelma, the ancient Calama, when they discovered the Accursed Baths. Bathing being such an essential and important part of their daily life, they quickly made use of the discovery, and built a large bathing establishment there, which they called

<sup>1</sup> The same legend, with slight variations, is told of a dolmen in Eastern Kabylia called "El' Aroussa," or "The Fiancée," and of others.



CONES—THE ARAB WEDDING



THE CASCADE, HAMMAM MESKOUTINE



Aquæ Tibilitinæ. At this period the heat had somewhat diminished. The water no longer had power to throw up cones, but was depositing its sediment in the form of steep-sided mounds. Now the springs upon the site of the Roman baths have also ceased to flow, and the water which supplied them only escapes in feeble trickles; the great thermæ themselves have disappeared, and nothing remains to show where they once stood but some of the outside walls and a few isolated stones lying neglected upon the grassy slopes. The Arabs, who never cut stones for themselves, but are always willing to use them when they find them ready to hand, for the mere trouble of removal, have destroyed nearly all traces of the Roman occupation at Meskoutine. A few vaults, the basements of some villas, great blocks of stone here and there, some tombstones and votive tablets which have been dug up and erected near the hotel at Meskoutine—this is all that remains of Aquæ Tibilitinæ.

And the changes at Meskoutine have gone on taking place ever since. The destruction of the Roman buildings, and the failure of the springs supplying their baths, are not the only ones. Nature is always moving and suffering alteration, and the heat of the subterranean fires is gradually becoming less. The waters have lost still more of their primitive force; the fountains are now very few. In course of time what has happened at Roknia will have happened also at Meskoutine. In spite of all the care of the blind, deaf, and dumb djinn, the fires will be extinguished, and the position of the great crater will be traceable only by the deposits left by the water.

It is difficult to believe this when standing below the Great Cascade, watching the clouds of steam rise,

and the boiling water gush out, and fall over the precipice at the rate of 25,000 gallons an hour. The sight is a strange, almost an unearthly one. The rock over which the water falls into the bed of the Oued Chedakra is rough and uneven, and looks like a petrified rapid, as indeed it is. The calcareous deposits of successive ages have assumed all kinds of colours, varying from the dark smoke-grey of the earliest, to the pure creamy white of the sediment of to-day. Between these there is pearl grey and every shade of yellow, from the palest saffron to a rich orange, in some places becoming almost red. All these beautiful colours are reflected in the deep water of a pool surrounded by grey-green olives, with great twisted trunks. Down below, in a little wooded glen upon the other side of the road winding up towards the station, the natives wash their clothes, and sometimes cook their vegetables, in the boiling water of the river. In the healing properties of the water the people have unbounded faith. Both these and the other hot springs near Biskra are endowed by the natives with powers that are almost miraculous; there is hardly any ailment which they are considered incapable of curing. Wondrous tales of recoveries are related by those who bathe in the waters of Hammam es Salahin, or the Baths of the Saints, near Biskra. If advertisements were needed to recommend them, no better one could be devised than the conversation of the people in the little tram-car as it goes backwards and forwards between these baths and Biskra.

I have said that the sequence of events connected with the craters at Roknia and at Meskoutine were the same. But there was one great difference between them. At the former place the eruption of boiling water had already actually ceased in prehistoric times, and the

only remaining records of their existence are the deposits now forming the soil. At Meskoutine, though the formation of the cones took place in a prehistoric period, this began so much later that the crater at the present time is still active. When one considers the fact, that, though belonging to such primitive ages, the cones at Meskoutine had not begun to rise until the crater at Roknia had finally cooled, an idea is obtained, difficult indeed to grasp, of the vast ages that have elapsed since first the fountains at Roknia began to throw up cones.

It is possible, too, that at Roknia, where all was finished during the world's childhood, the curative properties of the water were unknown and undreamed of, and that the only effect upon the primitive mind of those great fountains of water and volumes of steam was to inspire the dread, to which I have alluded, of a mysterious demoniacal power that was working deep down in the bowels of the earth. At Meskoutine this has not been so. Civilisation has twice been brought there by a conquering people, who have made practical use of the waters: first the Romans; now, in modern times, the French.

In other ways than that of utilising the boiling water of the Accursed Baths, the French are doing much the same in North Africa as was in earlier times accomplished by the Romans. They are bringing back to the land the cultivation which was destroyed by the Arabs, whose conquest was purely retrograde and destructive. They have established peace and safety, where before robbery, rapine, and murder held sway. They have made roads and railways, and have opened up possibilities of trade and employment to the natives. They have generally improved the condition of the country. Nevertheless

liberty and independence are sometimes far sweeter than subservience and improvement. The native doubtless prefers to be able to fix his abode wherever he likes, and to do whatever happens to suit him with the land, to having it put under cultivation by the commune. And as in India and Egypt there still is much secret restlessness, so it is in North Africa. The terrible slaughter of 1845, when from 800 to 1000 Arabs were burnt to death in the caves of Ouled Riah, near Mostaganem, has since been fully avenged by insurrections and massacres. In 1871 the tribes were ripe for revolt. It was then that the murder of Europeans took place at Palestro, near Algiers. The natives also rose in the Medjerda Mountains. The holes made for the muskets in the walls of the cemetery at Souk Ahras by the Europeans who were obliged to entrench themselves there, may still be seen. Now the French have built forts and considerably strengthened their military force. In some districts it is thought necessary to make regulations and restrictions preventing the natives of the surrounding country from assembling without leave in the great mosques. Very stringent rules are also enforced upon natives moving from place to place by rail. They are obliged to have authorisation, and to state their business and reasons for travelling. The French have them remarkably well in hand, and are doing their best to keep them so.

However, notwithstanding all precautions, a tentative insurrection was made at Marguerite in Algeria as lately as 1901 by a neighbouring mountain tribe. In this massacre, according to Dr. Bertholon, a strange glimpse was given of a pagan custom still in vogue amongst the Mohammedan Libyans. The ancients were wont to sacrifice some of their prisoners

to Hammon. During the Marguerite insurrection, turning their heads to the east, where the sun, or Hammon, rises, the natives killed their prisoners "in the name of God."<sup>1</sup>

One cannot wonder that a people in this state of culture should sometimes be inclined to resent improvements accompanying European civilisation, especially when they naturally involve the loss of their liberty. But the fact remains that improvements have been and are still being made. Their effect upon the cultivation of the land and the rendering it fertile can nowhere be seen better than at Hammam Meskoutine. Close to the Great Cascade and the scattered groups of queer, exhausted, grey cones, and not far from the ruins of the Roman thermæ and the villas of Aquæ Tibilitinæ, a comfortable bungalow hotel has been built, and the water is utilised for modern baths. There is no Arab village near, only here and there groups of tents or a settlement of perhaps a dozen huts. Dotted about are a few homesteads, and the country is farmed and tilled by French people. The valley is rich with corn; and the wild olives which cover the sides of the hills are being grafted and rendered fruitful.

Numbers of the natives come down from the mountains for the olive harvest. In the spring sunshine of a February day the olives are being picked. It is a busy scene and a picturesque one. The great encircling ranges of misty blue mountains, the light flickering through the shadowy leaves of the olives and falling upon the figures grouped under the fantastically twisted branches of the old trees. Men there are, in striped brown gandouras; women clad in bright-coloured garments, wearing huge red head-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 336.

dresses almost a yard wide. Great silver ear-rings as large as saucers are kept in place by chains and brooches fastened across the front of the head-dress; the metal gleams as it catches the sun. Funny little half-naked babies and queer, large-eyed boys and girls play about, or help with the work. Whole families are gathered about under the trees. All who are able to do anything are busy; some standing upon ladders stripping the fruit from the branches; others gathering it up as it falls in pale green or purple heaps upon the brown sheets spread over the ground, separating it from the leaves, and finally putting it into sacks. A tall Arab, garbed in white, stands like a presiding fate watching; not to urge the workers to greater industry, for the work is paid by the piece, and the rapidity of their labours only affects the people themselves, but to see that no injury is done to the trees.

And all the time, from somewhere close by, comes the sound of a pipe; the sound which is the essence and embodiment of the spirit of North Africa, which has a part in every fête and every ceremony, be it sad or joyful, religious or secular. For the Arab plays his pipe upon every occasion. He will do a little work and then sit down to play. He follows the plough playing his pipe, or beguiles the long hours while he minds his flocks with its music.

Then as the sacks are filled with the fruit, they are laid upon the backs of mules and donkeys. The animals are waiting patiently under the shadow of the trees. And the little procession makes its way to the oil factory.

The oil-press at Meskoutine is formed upon the same principle as the simple ones of the native, and though it may have lost something in picturesqueness,

it has certainly gained in speed and power. Instead of miserably thin and half-starved animals to turn the heavy mill, electric machinery is employed. And the same thing applies to the press. In the native machine the huge screw is made of wood; in the elaborate modern European one it is of steel.

But the process is practically the same. As the olives are brought in fresh from the groves they are placed between the two great stones of the mill and crushed. The pulp is then put into flat saucer-shaped cases made of fibre. These are piled one above another in the press, the screw descends, and the oil streams out. This is the best quality of oil. The pulp is then mixed with water, and pressed again. This yields the second quality. In each case the oil is washed and purified with water. And nowhere is there better oil made than at Hammam Meskoutine, or more absolutely pure and tasteless.

Hammam Meskoutine being a health resort, it strikes one as somewhat ironical that the place should be ornamented with tombstones! Many stones and votive tablets have been dug up at Aquæ Tibilitinæ and in the neighbourhood, and set up amongst the orange and lemon trees in the large courtyard of the hotel, under the shade of a wonderful terebinth tree that spreads out its branches over a radius of about fifty feet in all directions. A Roman memorial of somewhat touching interest has been placed here. It is an oblong stone of about five feet in height. In front there is a full-length figure of a man placing offerings upon an altar. Upon the two sides the Lares, in the usual form of two snakes, are reaching round to eat off the altar, while the inscription to the genius of the house records that it is the offering of a freed man, Antistius Agathopus, for the prosperity

of his master, an officer of the Third Legion, and his family. Many others amongst the stones are human documents. How much is implied in the terse inscription, "To his incomparable wife," placed by a Roman husband upon one of them. *His* name appears, but *hers* is lost in oblivion. She is simply "his incomparable wife."

Another peculiarly interesting and curious little stone stands amongst the golden fruit-trees at Meskoutine. It corresponds, with certain differences, to one now in the museum at Algiers, which was discovered in 1858 in an orchard at Abizar in Kabylia, and is said to be Libyan. Both these stones are bas-reliefs. The measurements of the former are as follows:—Height, 5 feet to 3 feet 8 inches; width, 3 feet 7 inches; thickness, 4 inches. It bears an inscription which has been translated by M. Hanoteau—

"To Ioukar (or Iakous).

Amouren (or Annoures) renders homage to his master."

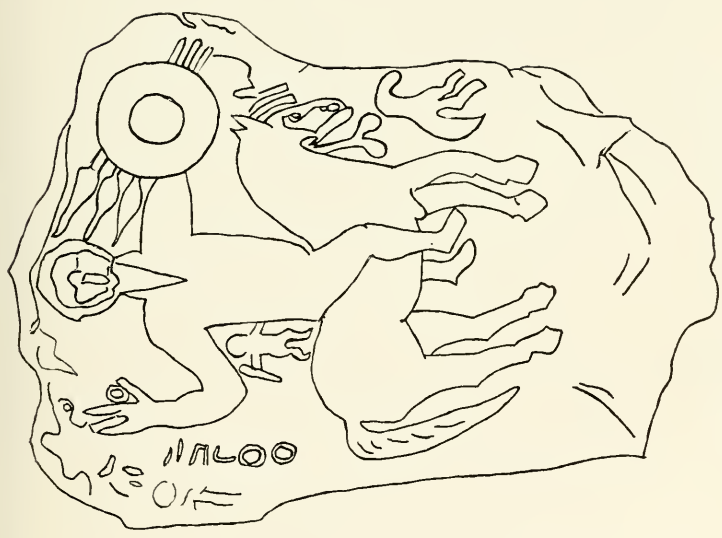
Upon this stone is rudely carved a man with a pointed beard, sitting upon a horse. In his left hand he has a round shield and three arrows. His right hand is raised and he holds an uncertain object between his thumb and first finger. Another very small man stands upon the horse, behind the rider. Round the horse's neck hangs an amulet resembling those that are hung round the camels and other beasts of burden of the natives at the present day. In front and to the right of the horse two little animals, which might be dogs or cats, are very rudely carved, the latter close to the end of the spears is only slightly indicated in the illustration.

Accepting the translation of the inscription given



STELE AT HAMAM MESKOUTINE

THE CAVALIER GOD (?)



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by M. Hanoteau,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bertholon considers this carving to be the representation of a cavalier god, Bacchus or Dionysus having been in the East represented as a cavalier god, and the name of Bacchus in the Eleusinian mysteries having been Iakous. He mentions also that in the cult of this god in the region of the Ægean Sea were included emblems of which the amulet round the horse's neck is one, also that the cult of a cavalier god was a popular one in Thrace, and suggests an analogy between the Abizar stele and a bas-relief somewhat resembling it discovered in Thrace.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bertholon also mentions that in the excavations made by Père Delattre at Carthage, several instances of a cavalier god with conic head-dress were discovered.<sup>3</sup>

M. Georges Doublet considers the Abizar stele to be a fine instance of the ancient work of the natives of North Africa,<sup>4</sup> representing the direct tradition of Berber art at the time of the Romans; the method and style being the same as those of the great rock sculptures of Hadjar-el-Khenga, as well as those of Hadj Memoun and so many parts of the Souf and the Sahara.<sup>5</sup>

The Meskoutine stone is in every way of a much ruder description than the Abizar stele. It bears no inscription. The figure holds the shield in the right hand instead of in the left, and carries in its hand only two arrows instead of three. In the Meskoutine example the second man, the dog, and the amulet are all absent.

<sup>1</sup> There are various other interpretations: Berbrugger reading the name "Iakous"; Aristide Letourneux, "Babadjedel, son of Kazrouz Radji"; M. Halévy, "Babaouadilson, son of Kearour Ravai."

<sup>2</sup> Bertholon, *La Religion des Libyens*, p. 63, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Delattre, *Cosmos*, 1899 (Fig. 15); *Académie des Inscriptions*, 1898, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> The Meskoutine stone is another example.

<sup>5</sup> Doublet, *Musée d'Alger*, 1890 (Plate VI.).

## CHAPTER III

### FOUR GREAT TOMBS

UPON the high upland plateau, half-way between Cirta to the north and the Aures Mountains to the south, stands a huge pile, visible from a great distance, and dominating the surrounding country. It is the Madghasen, the sepulchre of the great Numidian chiefs, of the tribe and dynasty of Madghis, or Madgres, and of Masinissa, the greatest of them all.

Rude and severe, as also were their lives, the great solid mass seems a fitting burial-place for these primitive chieftains. For Masinissa especially, who, having spent his life in fighting, at the age of eighty-eight, once more mounted his horse to make war upon the walls of Carthage, and was laid to rest in the year that Carthage finally fell before the Roman legions, 146 B.C.

The tomb is built of enormous stones upon a circular base. The great cone rises to its apex, which is now missing, by a series of steps springing from sixty engaged columns, having Greek capitals. When it was entered about forty years ago, the chambers and galleries were found to be empty. Traces of fire were there; the tomb long before had been pillaged. Only the core of the great mutilated pile still stands, in solemn grandeur, defying the ravages of time and weather. And as Masinissa embodied in his person all the courage and hardihood of the Berber chiefs, so the Madghasen sums up in itself the simpler and more primitive forms of the native tombs.

It stands in the heart of his kingdom, overlooking the country where he lived and fought and conquered.

The Berbers are an adaptable people, and until the crystallising influence of Islamism settled upon them, conformed to the religion of their conquerors. Yet at heart they have always been unconquerable and roving, and have loved independence. The strength of unity has never been understood by them. Even if, as sometimes happened, a few villages established a league for the sake of defence, that league was always quickly broken. And so to force them to form a kingdom amongst themselves, or attach themselves at all to the soil, needed a strong man, as well as a valiant one. This triumph was achieved by Masinissa.

Although he had been brought up at Carthage, Masinissa remained to the end a Berber. It was the secret of his power with his own country people. His physical strength, his power of endurance, and indomitable courage made him invincible. He possessed also that obstinacy against fate which characterises the Berbers, and in which they differ from the Arabs, who are fatalists. And the foe against whom he had to fight was no mean one.

Between Masinissa and Syphax, the great Massesyan chief, there had always existed the jealousy which is another characteristic of the Berbers. It rose to its height when Syphax married Sophonisba, the daughter of Hasdrubal, who, it is said, had been already promised to his rival, and joined the Carthaginians. Then Masinissa left the Carthaginian side, upon which he had always fought, and, under Scipio, the Roman general, took up arms against Syphax. Together they made a treacherous attack upon the camp of Syphax and Hasdrubal, near Utica. Syphax was taken prisoner, and his capital, Cirta, now Constantine, was given by Scipio to Masinissa.

Of all the great cities of North Africa, with the exception always of Carthage, and perhaps, since the Turkish invasion, also of Algiers, there is none which for actual strength, beauty of situation, strategic importance, and romantic interest can compare with Constantine, the Kirtha, The City, or Cirta of Punic times, the native metropolis of North Africa. Commanding the upper waters of the Great River, Oued-el-Kebir or Ampsagas, here called the Rummel, it is buried deep enough in the mountains to be safe from surprise, yet near enough to the plains and the sea to be a continual menace. The city has passed into different hands as invasion after invasion has swept over the land. But though besieged eighty times, it can boast that since the Romans took it in the fourth century, and rechristened it by the name of their Emperor, it had never been conquered in fair fight until the French, under General Damremont, captured it in 1837; a very gallant feat of arms, which has been commemorated by Horace Vernet on the walls of Versailles.

To Cirta, built upon an almost impregnable rock, 2600 feet above the sea, with four sides facing the points of the compass, came Masinissa. Upon the very edge of the precipice stands the Kasba, the fortress enclosing the royal palace and the courts of justice. The scene was a fit setting for the savage romance and tragedy attending the Berber chief's entrance into the town.

At the door of the Kasba stood Sophonisba, the wife of Syphax, and the cause of his desertion from the Romans. She threw herself at Masinissa's feet, wringing her hands, and weeping, and beseeching him not to let her fall into the hands of the enemy of her people, the Romans. She was young and beautiful, and the great Berber chief pitied her. If it is true that she



A SUNNY CORNER



GORGE OF THE RUMEL, CONSTANTINE

[illegible]

had been promised to Masinissa before she was given to his rival, now the moment of his triumph and revenge had arrived. Besides, as his wife, Sophonisba surely would be safe. He married her the same day that he entered into Cirta.

But a tragedy was inevitable. Sophonisba was doomed to die. Wife successively of the two savage rivals, she had to bear the terrible burden of their undying jealousy and hate. Some days later, when Syphax was reproached by Scipio for having deserted Rome, like a true son of Adam, he cast the blame upon Sophonisba. "She has lost you me," he declared; "take care—she will lose you others."

And Scipio realised the danger. Besides, Sophonisba was really the wife of his captive; he was desirous that the beautiful woman should grace his triumph upon his return to Rome; he demanded her from Masinissa.

And now the Berber chief was in great straits. He dared not keep Sophonisba. He would not give her up into the hands of the Romans. One thing only remained: Sophonisba must die. So he sent her some poison by the hands of a slave. And, merely remarking that "it would have been more dignified if she had not been married at her funeral," the beautiful woman drank it, thus relieving the world of the inconvenience of her presence.

Her death at the Kasba only swelled the number of the deaths of women which have taken place near that awful spot.

The site on which the city stands rises sharply from the south to the north; the beautiful little marabout of Sidi Rached, looking over the Pont du Diable, lies 600 feet lower than the tremendous rock of the Kasba, where the river leaving the gorge dashes in a cascade

of two magnificent leaps, to find peace on the plain below. It was over the edge of this rock, resembling in many ways the Salto di Tiberio in Capri, that hundreds of the inhabitants of Constantine were driven by the French when they stormed the town. Over this awful precipice from time immemorial, right down to the time of the French occupation, unfaithful wives have been thrown by the King or Governor. It is a terrible height. Looking up from the little footpath running round the gorge at a distance of a few yards from the bottom, the great rock looms up like the figure of a most cruel fate. The mournful grandeur of the place is in keeping with the character of Masinissa and other stern and savage chieftains and the uncompromising times in which they lived.

Casting from a cliff has always been one of the commonest forms of execution ; as, for instance, from the Tarpeian rock at Rome. These executions partook of the nature of an atoning sacrifice ; the victim was regarded either as the representative of a god, or as the representative of a tribesman, whose life was sacred to his fellows. They were "slain before the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Care was taken that no blood should be spilt, for the blood that falls to the ground calls for vengeance. And so, to avoid the guilt of blood from being fixed upon any individual, criminals were sometimes stoned by the whole congregation, or strangled or drowned ; or, more generally, pushed from a height, that they might seem to kill themselves by their fall.<sup>2</sup>

Between the east side of the city of Constantine and the opposing heights of Mansourah, the gorge of the Rummel is narrow, rarely more than some hundred yards across, and straight. Fragments of Roman ruins

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 9 ; Num. xxv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 419.

still cling to its precipitous sides wherever lodgment can be found. Along the north side the water has burrowed deep down through a series of caverns until it reaches the Kasba. The Romans took advantage of the natural arch thus formed at the angle of the two sides, using the arch as its foundation, to erect a magnificent bridge, known here, as were the bridges at Toledo, the Calceus Herculis near Biskra, and elsewhere, as "El Kantara," the Bridge. Its ruins still remain.

It was over this bridge that Marshal Clausel delivered his ineffectual assault in 1836; and it was on the slopes of Mansourah that in the disastrous retreat of the French, which followed his failure, Changarnier won the reputation which he so nobly sustained in the Crimea.

"Soldiers," he said to his little detachment of the 2nd Light Infantry, when they were cut off from the main body, of which they formed the rear-guard, and were surrounded by the enemy, "Soldiers—you see those people there? Well, there are 6000 of them to 300 of us, so the sides are equal." The sequel proved that the boast was true.

The Bridge has now been replaced by an iron structure of a single span.

On the west side of the city, though no longer overlooking the river, the precipice is equally formidable. Along the south side the escarpments are still steep and lofty save for a narrow neck of almost level ground, little more than 200 yards across, which joins the city to the suburb Koudiat Aty. It was here that in the siege of 1837 General Damremont planted his cannon; here that he was killed on October 12, the day before the place was stormed by the gallant Colonel Lamoricière.

“Remember, Colonel, and tell your men,” said Valée, who had succeeded to the command, “that if by ten o’clock the city is not taken, at noon the retreat will begin.” “By ten o’clock,” was the reply, “the city will be ours, or we shall be dead.”

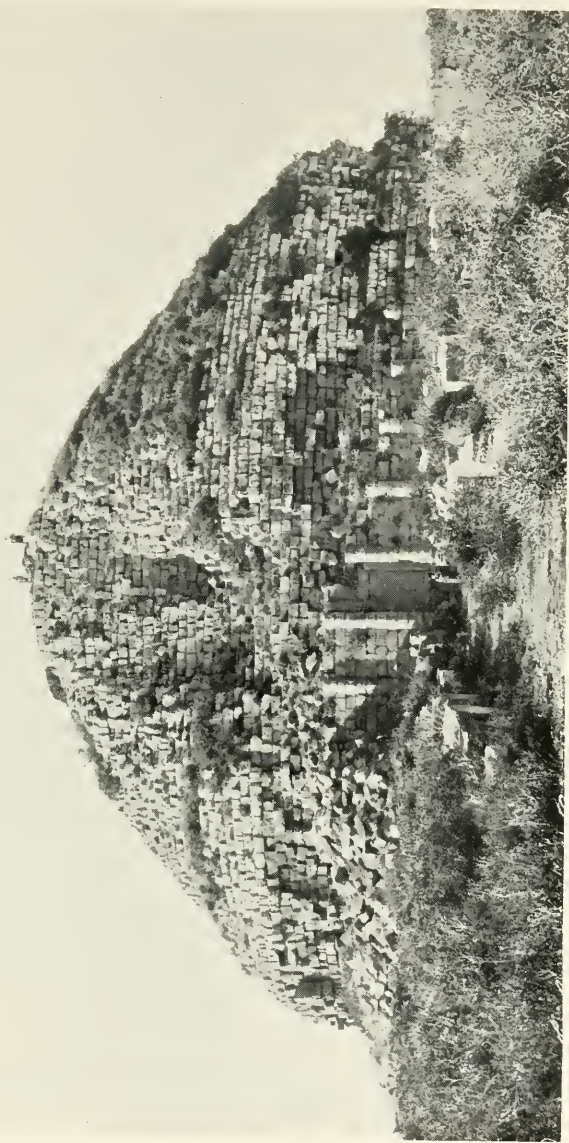
By nine o’clock both prophecies were fulfilled.

Such is the mighty fortress, the capital city of Syphax, Masinissa, and Jugurtha; a Durham as large as Toledo, protected by the gorge of Ronda; the key of the kingdom or province of Numidia.

. . . . .

Upon one of the last mountains of the Sahel stands another great tomb, in form resembling the Madghasen, but larger, and dominating even more completely the surrounding country. Here were buried Juba II., King of Mauretania, and his wife, Cleopatra Selene, whose capital was at Cæsarea, now called Cherchell.

His kingdom was won without fighting. His father, the hardy old Berber King, Juba I., had taken the part of Pompey, and, rather than suffer disgrace when defeated by Julius Cæsar, committed suicide. His son was taken in triumph to Rome. Later, Augustus, who had taken a fancy to the young man, gave him as wife another captive, Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra. He presented him also with the kingdom of Mauretania, which had been taken from his father. And the young Juba and his wife were sent to that half savage country with orders from the Emperor to civilise it. It must have been a hard task that was given him; but whatever he was or was not able to accomplish for the improvement of the condition of his people, he certainly worked hard for the cultivation of art. In this he was doubtless helped by his beautiful Egyptian wife, Cleopatra



KBOUR-ROUMIA



Selene. A fine library was collected at Cherchell. The place was enriched with statues, and works of art were brought from Rome. The tomb which was destined to be the final resting-place of himself and the great woman his wife, he adorned with marbles and bronze ornaments. Its apex was crowned by a colossal statue.

Nothing of all this splendour remains. You climb by a steep and narrow footpath up the side of the mountain, through the thickly growing arbutus bushes, gleaming with rough scarlet fruit. For a while the massive ruin—for it is nothing more—which is visible from the sea and front and all parts of the Metidja excepting only from Cherchell, is lost to sight. Then suddenly it bursts upon you. You are close to it, standing even under its shadow.

It is a wild scene, a scene of desolation and destruction. But the desolation is a grand one, and the destruction is only partial. Ruin though it is, this wonderful work of men's hands fills one with astonishment. For nineteen centuries it has been standing there watching ; sky, and mountains, and the sea below beating itself for ever against the cold breast of the rock.

Huge blocks of stone lie heaped up round and about the base of the tomb ; great broken columns, half buried in the grass and scrub. Ruthless work has been done here at some time.

The tomb itself is circular, and, like the pyramids, solid. It is surrounded by sixty Ionic engaged columns, surmounted by a cornice. Above the cornice rise the steps, mounting towards the apex. At the cardinal points are four enormous slabs of stone, like doors. Their panels, rudely cut, have the appearance of a great cross. Probably this has given rise to the

obviously erroneous translation of the name, Kbour Roumia, as "The Tomb of the Christian."<sup>1</sup>

Two pretty little Arab girls from a hut close by were waiting to take us inside the tomb. They had seen us coming, and have the key and some candles ready, wherewith to light up the interior of the great sepulchre, which means nothing to them but possibly the gift of a few sous. Stooping down, you creep through a low door, and find yourself in a rude chamber. Upon the stone over the entrance, which leads from this chamber to the centre of the tomb, a lion and lioness are rudely carved, probably the same emblems as those which are painted over the house of a marabout. You wind on slowly in single file, following the two little girls with their glimmering candles. Huge bats cling thickly to the roof of the low passage. Startled by the unwonted light of the candles, they stir with a soft, almost inaudible rustle. One of them detaches itself and flies with great flapping wings, like some restless spirit, through the gloom.

The difference between the Madghasen and the Tomb of the Christian is that in the former the passage goes straight to the centre, while in the latter it is spiral. In the centre of the Tomb of the Christian are two funeral chambers. In one of them doubtless lay Juba II.; in the other, his beautiful wife, Cleopatra. Now both are untenanted, save for the bats. Even the dust of the great Berber King and the Egyptian Princess has been scattered to the winds.

The Arabs have rifled the tomb, hoping to discover in it the treasure which they believe to exist in all buildings or monuments the origin of which they do

<sup>1</sup> "Kbour Roumia," as the tomb is called by the natives, who attribute every building, the origin of which is unknown to them, to the Romans, simply means "The Roman Tomb." Roumia is also the name now given by the Arabs to the Christians.



HOUSE OF A MARABOUT, KAIROUAN

[illegible]

not understand, and legends of all kinds have gathered round the sepulchre, of which the following is one.

An Arab of the Metidja, named Ben Kassem, having been taken prisoner by the Christians, was carried off to Spain. There he was sold as a slave to an old magician or sorcerer. One day his master heard him lamenting bitterly the captivity which separated him, perhaps for ever, from his family, and said to him: "Listen, I will send you back again to your own country, and to your people, if you will promise to do exactly as I tell you. When you arrive, go and see your family; stay with them three days; then go to the Tomb of the Christian, and there burn this magical scroll in a brazier, at the same time turning yourself towards the east. Do not be surprised at anything that happens, but return home again. This is all I demand in return for your liberty."

Ben Kassem, seeing nothing contrary to his religion in carrying out the orders of the sorcerer, did exactly as he had been requested. The instant that the paper was consumed by the flames the Tomb opened. A cloud of gold and silver pieces flowed out towards the sea in the direction of Spain. The man stood for a moment transfixed at the wonderful sight. Then he spread his burnous under the stream of treasure and caught some of it. Immediately the flow of money ceased. The charm was broken; and the Tomb closed up again.

For a long time Ben Kassem maintained a discreet silence about what had happened. But the adventure was too wonderful; he could not keep it to himself, and the tale soon reached the ears of the Pacha, who according to legend was Salah Raïs, who reigned from 1552 to 1556. The Pacha sent an enormous band of workmen with orders to demolish the sepulchre and to carry off whatever treasure they found there. But the

first blow of the hammer had scarcely fallen, when a woman appeared upon the apex of the tomb, stretching out her arms and crying, "Halloula, Halloula—come to my help."<sup>1</sup> Immediately her appeal was answered. A cloud of mosquitoes came and attacked the workmen, effectually preventing them from continuing their work of destruction.

So the great pile crowning the heights remains until this day.

In the sixteenth century the Spaniards believed that it was the sepulchre of Cava, the beautiful girl who was seduced by the King of the Visigoths, whose father, to avenge her wrong, gave Spain into the hands of the Mussulmans. Others speak of immense treasure being jealously guarded in the tomb by the Fairy Halloula.<sup>2</sup> At rare intervals fortunate mortals have been given a share in these treasures.

A neighbouring shepherd, so the story goes, had remarked that one of his cows disappeared every night, and the following morning always returned to the herd. One night, having decided to watch the animal, he saw her creep in at an opening in the Tomb of the Christian, which immediately closed upon her. The following day a brilliant idea struck him. Hanging upon the cow's tail at the moment that she entered the opening, he was drawn in after her. At sunrise he came out again, bringing with him so much gold that he became the richest man in the place.

Another wonderful tomb there is of which I must speak. It stands amongst the grand old olives upon

<sup>1</sup> This allusion is interesting because the level plain just below the hill upon which the "Tomb of the Christian" stands was the site of an ancient Lake Halloula. The appeal was evidently made to the fairy or spirit of the lake.

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Gsell.

the borders of the ancient Roman city of Thugga, not far from the great arch of Septimius Severus and the road to Kef. It belongs to the fourth century B.C., and is the most important specimen of Punic architecture which escaped the Romans in their ruthless and bitter destruction of everything that might recall the prosperity and splendour of the first Carthage. Two thousand four hundred years later it was partially thrown down. Its restoration by the French Government is not yet finished. The four great Victories that crowned it still lie dethroned amongst the long grass, under the olive trees, in company with many of the huge stones which have yet to be raised before the beautiful pile is once again complete.

The trading Phœnicians, when they came to North Africa, settled in towns and upon the coast, and made friends with the natives, the Numidians or Berbers, who still remained the inhabitants of the country. And, as I have said elsewhere, there was much intermarrying between the principal families of the two people, and some fusion of their manners and customs and religious ideas. The more savage natives benefited in some measure by the higher civilisation of the strangers. And so it came to pass that the beautiful mausoleum of Punic architecture was erected at Thugga as the burial-place of a Berber petty king or great lord. Nothing is known of him but his name and those of two of his ancestors.

Ataban, son of Ifmatat, son of Falao—these names, with an inscription, are recorded both in Libyan and Punic, the two languages which were then spoken in the country, upon a stone that was inserted on one side of the tomb. It was this stone that caused the partial destruction of the mausoleum.

In 1842 the British Consul-General at Tunis dis-

covered the inscription, and realising its immense interest, made the, perhaps to our present ideas, unfortunate mistake of thinking that the British Museum was a better place for it than its original position. He therefore obtained leave from the Bey to remove it. Unluckily, the men employed to do so damaged the tomb itself. The top and the greater part of the sides were thrown down before the precious relic could be detached. However, though displaced, the stones were not removed from the spot or seriously injured. And the work of rebuilding the tomb is rapidly being carried out.

The French never cease to rail against Sir Thomas Read for this "act of Vandalism," as they call it. One cannot altogether wonder, for to them the chief value of the mausoleum is destroyed. The stone with its interesting inscription has passed out of their possession; and doubtless its loss is not compensated for by the fact that it is safely housed and valued in a London Museum.

Another act of the British Consul is recorded upon his tombstone in the cemetery of the English Church at Tunis—that he used his personal influence with the Bey, and prevailed upon him to abolish slavery throughout his dominions. It seems a pity that the "act of Vandalism" should be more generally remembered by the French in Algiers than the act of humanity.

The tomb at Thugga is square, and is surmounted by that form of pyramid which had already been employed for Egyptian tombs in the eighteenth dynasty, and which spread afterwards throughout the East, reaching North Africa, the Cyrenaique, and Tripoli.<sup>1</sup> Mons. Saladin, who has made a special study of these

<sup>1</sup> René Cagnat.

tombs, says that they contain a mixture of both Greek and Egyptian elements ; the cornice and capitals being Egyptian, the figures and decoration being Greek. This mixture constitutes Carthaginian art.

Mons. Saladin is also able to give a description of what the tomb was like before it was destroyed, and therefore what it will be when it has reached that completion which is rapidly approaching. The lower stage, which is decorated with Ionic pilasters and false windows, rises upon a square base composed of several steps. Upon the eastern side was an opening leading to the interior. The second stage repeated the lower one, resting upon more steps and forming another massive square with Ionic decorations and engaged capitals. Above this, upon another platform of steps, flanked at its corners with pedestals bearing figures of men upon horseback, stood the third storey. This was decorated in the same manner as the first. Upon the sides were representations of four horse chariots, in low relief in archaic style. The beautiful monument was completed by the pyramid, having at its angles the four great winged Victories, and was crowned by a lion.

A most interesting tomb was excavated near Menerville in 1896, the stones of which have been taken to make the roads of the town !<sup>1</sup>

The tomb stood upon the high ground above Menerville, not far from the only pass leading through the mountainous tract lying between the Metidja and Kabylia. It was through this pass, which they could not have discovered for themselves, that the French were conducted by an Arab against the powerful and

<sup>1</sup> Taking into consideration the immense interest shown by the French in the excavations they are carrying out in North Africa, that this act of vandalism should have been permitted is all the more surprising.

warlike Kabyle tribe of the Ait Iraten, who had offered the stoutest resistance to their conquerors.<sup>1</sup>

The situation of the tomb was a magnificent one. After a train journey from Algiers and a drive of some miles in a carriage obtained from Menerville, we started to climb the steep side of the hill at the summit of which, as we supposed, still stood the tomb. We were anxious to compare it with others—the Tomb of the Christian, the Madghasen, and the one at Thugga already described. The day was hot, and the climb up the hill was rough walking ; but the view all the time was beautiful—a wonderful panorama enclosed by mountains. And every moment we expected, as we wound round the steep ascent, that a sight of the tomb would burst upon us. At last we reached the top of the hill.

“That is the tomb,” said the Arab guide, pointing to a hollow in the ground where the crypt had been, and a few loose stones lying scattered about.

The sepulchre itself had vanished into space. We had made an utterly fruitless journey. I shall not easily forget the sensation of disappointment as, hot and angry, we stood and gazed at the spot where the tomb had once been.

Now nothing remains but to give the account of the mausoleum as it has been described by M. Stephane Gsell, who saw it before it was destroyed.

It belonged to the fourth century of our era, and was probably of more than four hundred years later date than the Tomb of the Christian. But with this tomb it had many points in common. Both sepulchres had the same subterranean entrance, the same base,

<sup>1</sup> The Kabyles have never forgiven their betrayal, and still speak bitterly of the traitor who “sold them to the French,” and regard with resentment Fort National, which was built in 1857, and overlooks their country and ensures their enforced subjection.

the same false doors, engaged columns, and Ionic capitals. The same circular gallery led to the funeral chamber, while the rude figures of lions cut over the door leading into the passage, were in both instances alike. These are the points of resemblance.

But there are also differences. Both the earlier sepulchres, the Madghasen and the Tomb of the Christian, are purely native in character; the developed form of the primitive tomb or tumulus. But the Menerville tomb showed foreign influence; probably Roman. It was, says M. Gsell, octagonal. Upon each side were massive engaged columns, bearing Ionic capitals with large volutes, very like those employed in the neighbouring ancient Christian churches—at Tipasa, for instance; the bases of the columns were covered with a profusion of ornament, of floral and geometrical design. Upon a stone between two of the capitals was carved a chalice flanked by two fish.

The mortuary itself was empty; but there were evidences of foreign influence in its construction. It was unlike the small caverns which in the Madghasen and the Tomb of the Christian seem to be a development of the simple stone coffer of the primitive African tumulus. The sepulchral chamber at Menerville was very much larger. It recalled the form of the hollow tombs of Rome. But in this part of North Africa there are few traces of Roman civilisation, and no remains have been discovered of Roman towns. So the fact of this tomb having displayed the mixture of Roman and African styles causes M. Gsell to think that it was built by a native prince who had fallen under Roman influence without forgetting the traditions of his ancestors.

## CHAPTER IV

### PROPHETS OF ISLAM

DURING our stay at Tolga we received a visiting card inscribed with the name of Abdelmajid ben Cheick Sidi Ali ben Amor, accompanied by an invitation to have coffee. We went to the house, and found a grand-looking old man, magnificently dressed, sitting in a room, surrounded by his village council, a group also of fine old men. We were told that he was the marabout.

Another day we visited the baths of Fontaine Chaude, near Biskra. A group of Arabs were standing in the doorway as we arrived by the little tram-car. In their midst stood a man who towered head and shoulders above any of them. A whisper went round amongst the natives in the car—"the Marabout of Tolga"—and they looked at him with awe. It was our old friend again, who had driven over in state in a hired French carriage to take the baths.

In the Souks at Kairouan was an old man, horribly dirty and almost naked. His hair was worn long, in memory of the Prophet; both it and his hands were stained with henna, the reddish dye which is made from the leaves of the oleander or other plants, and is supposed to have special occult properties. In his hands he carried a small shell cup for alms. The people were flocking round him, kissing his hands and his garments, and giving him money and food. He also was a marabout.

At Tunis, in one of the narrow streets, a young

man is sitting. He is ragged, dirty, and half-starved. Week after week he gets poorer, and more ragged, and more starved in appearance. Not long ago he was good-looking, well-dressed, and following a trade. Suddenly he ceased to work; a change came over him; he had received a call. Now he is a marabout in the making. As yet his reputation as such is not fully established. Gifts are not showered upon him even for the asking. But his time will come. Presently the kindness will be upon his side in receiving the offerings; it will be considered a privilege to be allowed to give him anything.

Again, at Biskra, in the native village, a little old man is seen coming down the road accompanied by two or three tall Arabs. He is dressed in spotless white, and has a keen, refined, alert, well-cut face, reminding one of the pictures of Cardinal Newman. He is very rich, and he also is a marabout.

The fact being, that there is no outward sign by which the marabout may be known. He may live in a large house, be rich and belong to a hereditary line of marabouts, as do those of Tolga, of Biskra, and El Hamel, and as is usual amongst the Arabs of the oases, or he may be poor and dirty and live in a state of isolation as a hermit. He may even be mentally deficient or an epileptic. For these afflicted people are to the primitive mind surrounded by mystery, and relegated, with everything which is not understood, to the realms of the supernatural. But one thing, at any rate, all marabouts have in common. No matter to what class they may belong, or for what reason they originally ranked as such, when once the honour is attained, they are all accredited with magical gifts.

As the holy men of every cult and every religion

have always been endowed by their followers with the power to work miracles, so the marabout is likewise believed to possess this special attribute. Many are the tales of signs and wonders accomplished. They go on accumulating even at the present time. Modern civilisation, instead of interfering with the growth of the stories, is simply absorbed into them.

To take railways for example: quite recently the Marabout of El H'amel is said, by force of miracle, to have stopped the train in which he was travelling, causing it to wait for him while he got out and said his prayers by the side of the line.

A curious illustration of the prevailing belief in the power of the marabout to transfer himself rapidly from place to place by occult means was given us by an Arab boy at Bou Saada. The reputed marabout, who strangely enough in this case happened to be the French curé of the place, was able, said my informant, to "fly like a scarab." He was often seen by the natives flying over the mountains at night. Upon one occasion during the daytime two natives were journeying from Bou Saada across the desert. When they had travelled a distance of forty miles they suddenly saw the curé whom they had left behind in the village. He had reached the spot before them. The conclusion they came to was that he had flown there. The curé is now living in Algiers, but, the boy told us, he did not fly *there*—that would never have done; too many people would have seen him, and he wished to keep the fact of his powers secret.

I have been told by a native yet another story of modern miracle. One day a French officer wished to enter a shrine, and the marabout to whom it belonged objected to his doing so. The soldier persisted and went in notwithstanding, and suddenly the marabout



MARABOUT AT BOU SAADA

1871  
1872

struck him blind. Only when he had repented and subscribed a large sum of money to the shrine, did the holy man consent to perform yet another miracle for the soldier's recovery.

The curious thing is that at the same time that the marabout is surrounded by all this mystery, and accredited with supernatural powers, he is living in the midst of the people, moving about amongst them, and practically sharing their daily life.

The origin of the name Marabout is said to be *Mirābīt*, which signifies one who serves in a *Rabīt*. The *rabīt* was a fort, established principally upon the borders of the Mussulman Empire, and acting as the base of operations against the infidels.<sup>1</sup> In the *rabīt* the business of war alternated with pious exercises. Later, when peace was more or less established, and the original use of the *rabīt* was no longer necessary, it became a monastery or *zaouia*, and its guardian the *Mirābīt*—a religious apostle. Morocco has always been a great centre for these zealots. Numbers of them are said to have started from thence upon missionary journeys during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the great missionising period of Islamism. As they arrived as strangers in those parts of the country which they desired to convert, and as they laid claim to unusual gifts, it is conceivable that they were looked upon by the people in the light of sorcerers. For the sorcerer is generally a stranger, or a person around whom there seems to hang some mystery. Magical powers, therefore, were ascribed to these zealots. Then gradually, as Islamism spread, the sorcerers and their magical powers were received into the new religion. The sun, the moon, and the heavenly host became Allah, and the sorcerer was

<sup>1</sup> M. E. Doutté.

changed into the *Mirābīt*. In this way their continuity has been preserved.

The *Mirābīt* is the sorcerer Islamised. For into Islamism, as well as into Christianity, many practices of former religions were received because they could not be got rid of. These practices, however, being only looked upon as sorcery just so long as they remained outside the prevailing religion, the distinction between the sorcerer and the marabout remains extremely indefinite. For the powers of the saint became the same as had been the powers of the sorcerer. Both are accredited with marvellous and supernatural attributes. Both have intercourse and commerce with the djinns or spirits.<sup>1</sup> Both have power over the forces of nature ; can command rain or cause it to cease. Both are able upon occasion to render themselves invisible, to transport themselves instantaneously from one place to another, and transform themselves into various kinds of animals.

And not only do the people believe all these wonderful things of the marabout, but the marabout also believes them of himself. Charlatanism, it is true, may enter into all dealings with mysteries and things which are not understood. In all cases where the laity remains in ignorance, it is liable to be deliberately imposed upon. But this is not by any means always the case. The profound faith of the people in their marabout and his supernatural powers, often have the effect of making him believe in them himself—or, if not in their actual existence, at any rate in the possibility.

In the mystery surrounding the marabout, doubtless, lies the secret of his influence with the people.

<sup>1</sup> The marabouts are said to instruct the djinns in the Qu'ran. (M. E. Doutté.)

His power over them is the power of pagan times. It is born partly of ignorance, partly of fear. But chiefly it exists by reason of the close relation it bears to life, and the need of suffering humanity for some intermediary between itself and that Supreme Being in whom it has faith ; a need which in some form or other will doubtless last on so long as mankind lives, and suffers, and longs for solace.

And so, in North Africa, the native, in " the fell clutch of circumstance," desires, and seeks the relief which perchance it may be within the power of one possessed of miraculous gifts to bestow. After a journey of many days of weary toiling, he sees before him a great mountain, still to be climbed, and cries out for some one endowed with superhuman powers to remove it. When his flocks are starving for want of pasture, and his corn is dying in a drought, in his distress he seeks for some earthly, yet at the same time, miraculous power to cause the rain to fall. Or again it may be, he is stricken with some terrible disease, or is in some danger that it seems beyond ordinary human skill to avert ; and once more he wishes for an incarnation of superhuman strength to succour him. These benefits, and many others besides, he hopes to procure from the *baraka* of the marabout.

This illusive and mysterious quality is the essential attribute of the marabout. It seems to be akin to the power claimed by the Jewish prophets, and promised to the Apostles—the power to remove mountains, and to take up deadly things without suffering injury. It is sometimes hereditary, or it may be passed from one to another by initiation. When possessed of it, the marabouts dread *baraka* being stolen from them, and believe that certain happenings and events may cause it involuntarily, and against the will of the

possessor, to pass into another person ; nevertheless it has nothing whatever material about it. It is a purely spiritual quality ; therefore indefinable.

The marabout may be the first of his family to become one, and after him the title may become hereditary. The whole cult is enveloped in mystery, but it seems that a candidate for maraboutism considers that he has received some kind of call. Then the training and initiation, which sometimes lasts for years, and which also is shrouded in deep mystery, begins. Its object is the gaining by the candidate of the gift of *baraka*, whereby the marabout is able to bestow benefits upon his followers.

Many and various are the means by which these benefits are obtained. Actual physical contact with the marabout is the surest and most coveted ; to touch him or even his garment. This being impossible, " virtue " may proceed equally from some object which has been touched by him, or from something that has come into contact with him.

A blessing is obtainable from the act of washing in the water that a marabout has bathed in. Still more may this blessing be gained by drinking it. And as special properties have always been thought to reside in the saliva, so the saliva of the marabout is accredited with healing properties of an extraordinary kind.

Poverty and dependence upon almsgiving have always been distinguishing marks of the saint, or holy man. " Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purse, nor scrip for your journey ; neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves ; for the workman is worthy of his meat." So it was with the Apostles ; so it has been with the monks and nuns of Christianity, and so it continues to be with the marabouts of Islamism.

And yet, in contradiction, the fact remains that many of the marabouts are rich, and some of them extremely rich. Especially this is the case when maraboutism has been for some time hereditary. For the truth is, that when once the reputation of a marabout is established, no one either cares or dares to refuse him anything. At first it may be necessary for the candidate to ask for what he wants, whether it be bread or couscous, or coffee, or perhaps a few dates. Then, presently, a request is no longer needful; gifts are pressed upon the marabout. People are perfectly ready and willing to give him things, in order to receive in return the benefits of his *baraka*.

The fact of its being considered a great honour to eat food in company with a marabout is often a source of riches to him. People gladly pay highly for this privilege. Sometimes they will give fifty francs for a share in a meal that has probably cost only one. By this means again they hope to reap some measure of the holy man's *baraka*.

The marabouts are possessed of great influence in North Africa, for peace or otherwise. The Turks during their occupation of the country recognised that this was the case, and adopted the policy of conciliation by granting them exemption from taxation. And now the French are beginning to see the wisdom of the policy, and to realise that the power of the marabouts with the people is important, and one that has to be reckoned with. Undoubtedly these zealots have constantly been the means of stopping tribal warfare and brigandage.

For a long time they were the only force amongst the natives against sheer brutality.<sup>1</sup> They have also been the sole source of instruction in the midst of uni-

<sup>1</sup> M. E. Doutté.

versal ignorance. But, upon the other hand, should the marabouts desire to stir up revolt against the French occupation in North Africa, their influence would be far-reaching and omnipotent. Their wonderful and mysterious power of telegraphic communication with each other is a fact, though it is one that has never been understood by Europeans. Conceivably, it might be a most serious source of danger. In the case of a rising being possible amongst the natives, it would certainly be so. For by means of this secret telegraphy, the movements of the insurgents might be instantaneously made known; news of the disaffection would spread like lightning throughout the length and breadth of the country, right down as far as the Soudan and Egypt. We know that in the latter country this kind of thing happened at the time of the Mahdi's insurrection.

Quoting from the *Revue Coloniale*, June 1907, in his interesting book, *Across the Sahara*, Mons. Hanns Vischer mentions two curious instances given by Commandant Cadel of foreknowledge of events gained by the natives. Frowning over the oasis of Bilna, situated 350 miles from Lake Chad, is a dark and forbidding rock which warns the inhabitants of the approach of a caravan by singing. This sound, which is produced by the blowing of the wind through the crevices of the torn rock, was upon one occasion clearly heard by French officers. Upon October 6th, says Commandant Cadel, the rock had spoken; upon October 8th the first caravan consisting of 4851 camels and 857 men had arrived. The same French officer mentions that in the neighbourhood of Ghat some large clouds, which the Tuareks declare only appear when a large caravan is upon the road from Ganet, were seen. Two days later a special messenger

brought the news that a French expedition had arrived at Ganet.

Largely, doubtless, the mysterious transmission of knowledge to which I have previously alluded is due to a wonderful power of telepathy possessed by Orientals ; a gift gained and developed by fasting and meditation, and concentration such as, except in rare cases, the Western mind is incapable of, and cannot understand. At the same time the communion of the former with Nature appears to be much closer and deeper than ours, their knowledge of her working and laws more intimate. Perhaps some of the conclusions arrived at by Westerns laboriously through science are by Orientals reached through spiritual insight. And the observations of Commandant Cadel mentioned by Mons. Hanns Vischer suggest an interesting field for investigation, and possibly some further light upon the occult cognisance of distant events.

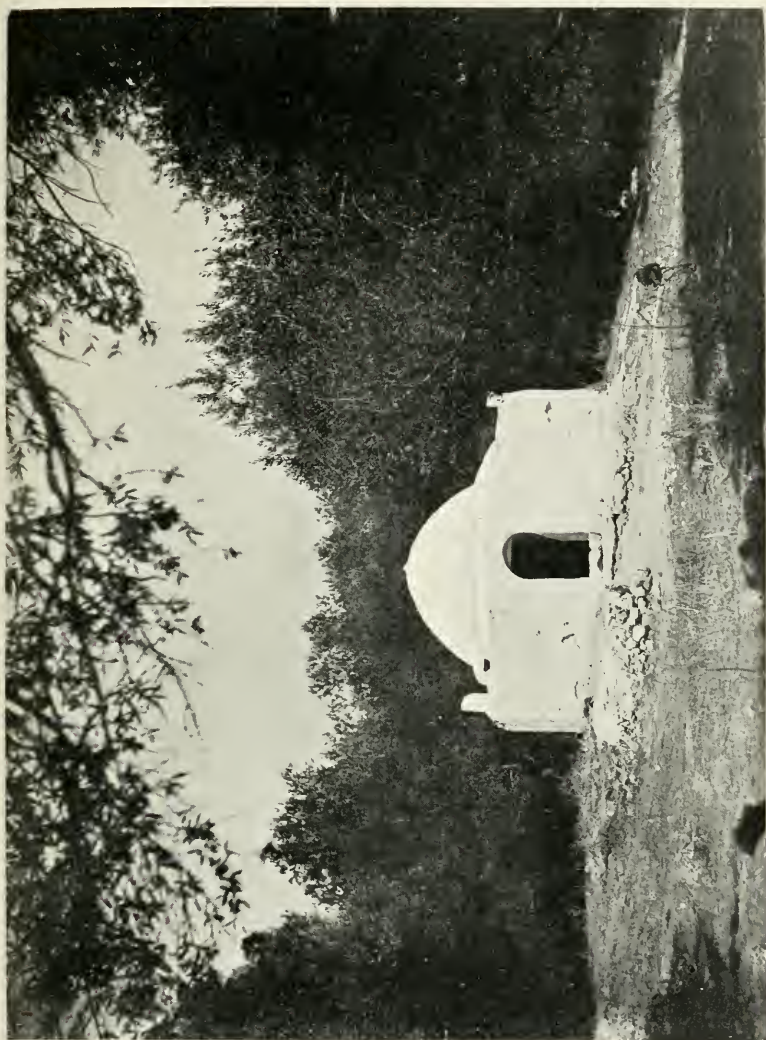
As I have said before, the whole problem of the marabout in North Africa remains a mystery. His fame and the veneration accorded to him do not end with his life. On the contrary, rather, they increase after his death.

Not long ago a much-revered marabout died at Tunis. As the funeral procession passed through the streets with the body carried upon an open bier, an immense crowd assembled. A specially large force of soldiers was detailed to guard the body, for much excitement was anticipated. But even they were unable to stem the mad rush of the people, in their anxiety to obtain some relic of the dead man. A hair from his head, still better from his beard, a scrap of his clothing—even a small portion of the bier upon which he was carried. Any one of these precious relics would bring *baraka* to the fortunate possessor

of it. The crowd was frantic. In spite of the efforts of the soldiers, the body was almost torn in pieces. The wooden bier was broken up by the struggling, fighting people, and the silken pall was rent to shreds.

After a marabout's death, his tomb becomes a marabout. Miracles are worked there, prayers are said, pilgrimages are made to it. Every marabout has his annual feast, when the pilgrims to his shrine bring presents either to his descendants or to the guardian of his tomb. This post is naturally a coveted one. The poor take perhaps a candle or a handful of dates ; the rich present wheat or barley. In time of drought, special pilgrimages are organised either to a living marabout or to the tomb of a dead one. For, as I have before said, a miraculous power over the elements of nature is above all one of the attributes of a saint or a magician.

Most familiar objects are they in North Africa, these tombs which have themselves become marabouts. Every village possesses one, even though it be only a heap of stones. No matter how simple it may be, veneration is paid to it. Generally a Moorish bath establishment possesses the tomb of a marabout, for ablutions are always connected with religion. In Tunis especially may be seen gaudy painted wooden coffins through the dim light and steamy atmosphere, with weird surroundings of half-naked figures. The painted wooden tomb of a specially revered marabout stands upon the spot where he died in the Souk at Tunis. When the people can afford it, they build a kouba over a saint's grave. These small, square, domed buildings are to be seen everywhere. They are always very white, and glisten in the sun with that peculiar vibratory light with which in the East white buildings palpitate under an absolutely blue sky. A



A MARABOUT



strange solemnity surrounds these little tombs. As one draws near to them one is sensible of the subtle fragrance of incense, that sweet savour which the gods have always loved;<sup>1</sup> odours which more than any other memory recalls North Africa.

They are generally visible from far off; the spot selected for the tomb of a saint is always the highest one possible. People of all times and all religions have worshipped upon the high places.<sup>2</sup> Not infrequently the worship of an earlier religion has been continued upon the same site, when a later one has supplanted it. Upon the same spot may be found an accumulation of old cults, of tree worship, of water worship, the sacrifice to the djinn, and the new marabout of the orthodox Mohammedan worship to-day.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fumigation with the smoke of incense from early times was a favourite accessory to sacrifice. It seems probable, however, that the religious value of incense was originally independent of animal sacrifice, for frankincense was the gum of a very holy species of tree which was collected with religious precautions. Pliny says that the right even to see the tree was reserved to certain holy families, who, when engaged in harvesting the gum, had to be ceremonially clean. Whether, therefore, the sacred odour was used in unguents, or burned like an altar sacrifice, it appears to have owed its value, like the gum of the samora (acacia) tree, to the idea that it was the blood of an animate animal. Supernatural life and power reside in the trees themselves, which are conceived as animate or even rational. (Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 427.)

<sup>2</sup> "And the people sacrificed in high places because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord until those days" (1 Kings iii. 2).

<sup>3</sup> M. E. Doutté mentions an instance of this close to Tlemcen, upon the site of the old marabout of Sidi Ya'goub at Tiprisi.

## CHAPTER V

### FOUM ES SAHARA

BISKRA, the present terminus of the railway, is the Mecca of the casual tourist, who, with little trouble, and without wandering from the region of large hotels, without, indeed, changing his train, may wish to believe that he has seen the desert. And because at Biskra the tourist is largely represented, it follows that the "guides" are numerous also. "Guides," indeed, there are of every description, pleasant companions generally; as a study of Oriental life, a varied experience of them is both interesting and amusing.

There is the guide who is nominally attached to the hotel, whose rôle, by means of annual divorces, appears to be the providing of marriage ceremonies for the benefit of the visitors, while they in their turn are expected to supply the two or three pounds which, however often given, always seem to be still needed before the wedding can take place.

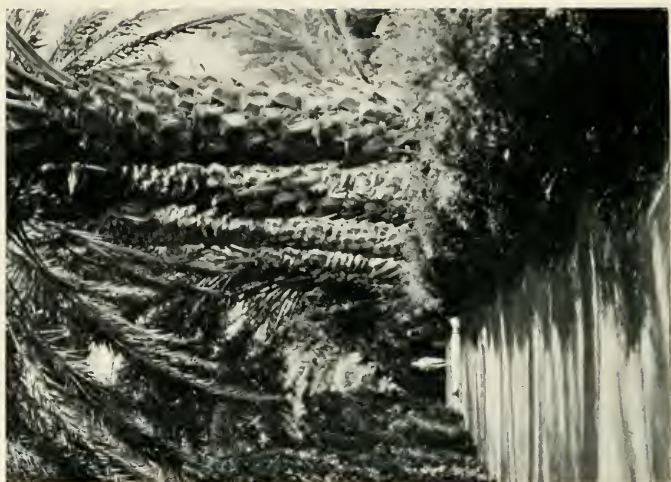
There is the smart, good-looking, youthful guide, who borrows lustre from an alleged descent from the Prophet, and is always appearing in gorgeous new clothes, obtained, it is whispered, from the shops for the purchase of supposed "clients," worn for a day, and then returned as unsuitable.

There is the quiet, reliable, studious young guide, who is too proud to ask for employment, and perhaps has no need; for he seems to be a general favourite, and to be employed by the same people when they return to Biskra year after year. Of his employers he





IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY, BISKRA



GARDEN AT BISKRA

speaks with the greatest pride and admiration, as indeed do all the "guides."

When a card or recommendation is obtained it is greatly treasured, carried about in a leather case, and brought out to be shown at every opportunity. "He is a very great man in England," they say, perhaps, of one of their clients; or of another, "He is a great English marabout." Occasionally they are a little supercilious in their remarks, as, for instance, one of the Arab guides who had been employed by an English writer, whose rapid motor tour through the country had resulted in a book—"I know how these books are made; I tell them five words, and they make ten pages."

All this takes place in the modern Biskra of the tourist, and the French Government, and the Hôtel de Ville, and European shops and hotels.

The real Biskra, the ancient Bescera and capital of the Ziban, the brown earthen village surrounded by palm trees and enclosed by mud walls, through whose narrow streets, only wide enough for a donkey to go, small streams meander; which was presided over by the Roman fort,<sup>1</sup> and later by the Turkish one, is a distinct place, and a very different. The ebb and flow of native life, it is true, has reached and flooded the market-place built in New Biskra by the French. Here you may see occasionally a native squatting beside a heap of queer brown objects like huge winged grasshoppers, which are locusts. They are cooked, and being sold to the people, who pull off the legs and wings and devour them upon the spot in the same way that a European might eat shrimps.

In a corner of the market sometimes may be seen a couple of old women, half blind and hideously ugly,

<sup>1</sup> Diocletian secured the south frontier of the Aures by a series of forts or lines about the year A.D. 300. (Mommsen.)

selling the dried flowers of the acacia or mimosa, mixed with gums which are used for incense. From them also may be bought for a few pence delightful little censers made of pottery in which the sweet-smelling stuff is burnt in the tombs of marabouts, at religious rites, and upon all holy spots. But Oriental life, though it is always interesting, needs as a setting and background the rich colouring and picturesqueness of the purely native *souk* or bazaar, and these are not to be found at Biskra.

In an open space between the town and the negro village stands the statue of Lavigerie, the French bishop who worked so hard in North Africa for the natives and the Arabs. Beyond, upon the edge of the Sahara, is the wonderful garden—wonderful for this reason, that it is so near the desert. Its splendid palms and bushy shrubs actually touch the arid waste, its faultlessly kept footpaths are made of sand. You may stand in the dim shadow of its trees, the palms which, according to the Eastern proverb, must have their feet in the water, while their heads are in the fires of heaven, with the wilderness spread out before your eyes. Only a few steps are needed to bring you into its blazing heat.

Herein lies the romance of the garden. It is too prim, too conventional to be really beautiful, with a primness which is more accidental than studied or essential. For it is not that of the delightful old English garden with its set walks and formal hedges; nor has its conventionality anything in common with the well-considered grandeur of the Italian plaisance.

Some elements there are which go to the spoiling of the garden. It is invaded by matter-of-fact, unimaginative people, anxious to prove the identity of

certain spots, and to connect them with the characters in a novel; these meet you at every turn. Vendors of carpets and of miscellaneous wares dodge and follow you, successfully eluding all your efforts to escape them, finally settling themselves on the ground at your feet, hoping by sheer importunity to drive you to an undesired bargain.

All this vulgarises, though it cannot entirely destroy, the charm of the garden.

Outside, and just upon its fringe, flows the river Oued Biskra. Its wide stony bed is dry in the winter. In its midst is set a little square, white-domed building, the tomb of the marabout Sidi Zazour, one of the most revered in this part of the Sahara. The guardian of the tomb is a queer, half-savage looking old man, who is somewhat of a mystic. He goes home to sleep every night in the little Arab village of M'cid close by. Most of the day he may be found in the small stone cell adjoining the sepulchre inside the building. Here he prays and meditates, and hopes himself perhaps to become a marabout in time, or lies upon the floor curled up in his burnous, half or wholly asleep. Close by, in the little funeral chamber, that is hung round with great coloured lamps and silken flags and pictures of Mohammedan worship, sleeps the marabout Sidi Zazour. His grave is enclosed by a green-painted grill, and is covered by a catafalque, upon which are spread, one above another, a dozen gaudy palls. Over them all reposes the usual rosary formed of a hundred great round wooden beads, used for counting the ninety-nine attributes of God, with the essential name of Allah.

A strange silence reigns in the solitary tomb. Sometimes the old man, its guardian, says that the silence is broken. As he sits there alone watching,

the dead marabout speaks to him. When he goes at night to light the taper, he feels a hand upon his arm, and the marabout utters a weird, low cry. "I am all alone," he says; "there is no one who understands me." And the old man clutches your arm with a half-wild expression as he tells you of it. Sometimes the old guardian hears more voices. Sidi Abderahmen from Algiers, who can make the journey in a quarter of an hour, or some other dead marabout, has come to converse with Sidi Zazour. "Are you not afraid?" I ask the old guardian, "when you hear the voices?" "Oh no," he answers; "what is there to be afraid of; they are all holy men—they will do me no harm." And the old man, who is a half-mystic, half-savage devotee, smiles with a smile of fierce satisfaction as he rolls himself up once more in his burnous upon the floor. He interested us; we wanted to hear more of his strange experiences; but he knew very little French, and was very difficult to understand; to talk much it was necessary to have an interpreter who spoke Arabic.

So one day we decided to go again to visit the old man in the tomb, taking with us a young Arab of about eighteen who had sometimes been out with us before. We met him in the *souk* in the morning and engaged him for the afternoon. He was to meet us just outside the hotel. As soon as the arrangement was made, he asked for an advance of one franc upon his afternoon fee. What did he want it for, we asked. To this question he gave the somewhat astonishing answer—"To buy some shoes for my mother." As he had told me before that his mother lived some distance off at Old Biskra, I questioned the likelihood of his buying the shoes and taking them to his mother before we started for the expedition, directly after luncheon. However, he declared that he should cer-

tainly do so, and went off with the franc which we very unwisely gave him.

He showed an extreme disinclination for walking when he arrived at the time appointed in the afternoon. It was very hot, he suggested; would we not like to take a carriage? This suggestion was repeated two or three times, at intervals of about five minutes, without the success that he wished. We intended to walk to Sidi Zazour; if it was not too hot for us, it was certainly not too hot for an Arab; so we went on, while our young guide, who had always before been pleasant and communicative, walked sulkily and silently behind.

The suspicion was unpleasantly forced upon us that certain hints given us by another guide were not without reason. The franc that we had advanced at his request had, as we might have anticipated, not found its way to the shoemaker's. The boy had been drinking absinthe.<sup>1</sup>

The suspicion became a conviction when finally we arrived at Sidi Zazour. There was no interesting talk with the guardian of the tomb in store for us, through the interpreter, that afternoon. We found the old man rolled up in his burnous half asleep upon the floor of the little cell. He seemed less inclined to be communicative than at the time of our last visit. The boy was hopeless. The walk and the heat had caused the absinthe by this time to have full effect. He

<sup>1</sup> This unfortunate habit the Arabs have learnt from the French. They excuse themselves for thus disobeying the Mussulman religious command to drink no wine by saying that absinthe was not invented in the time of the Prophet. These are his precepts: "O believers, surely wine and games of chance and statues and the divining arrows are an abomination of Satan's work! Avoid them that ye may prosper. Only would Satan sow hatred and strife among you by wine and games of chance and turn you aside from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will ye not therefore abstain from them?"

likewise rolled himself up in his burnous and went to sleep, though when we roused him presently and reprimanded him he denied the fact. He was "only meditating," he declared. It was "good to meditate in a holy place." To our suggestion that we did not engage him for the afternoon and bring him to Sidi Zazour for that purpose he made no reply. When we inquired as to the subject of his meditations, he answered cheerfully, "The shortness of life." So disgustedly we left him to pursue them, and the strange things that we might have learnt that day remain still locked up in the bosom of the old mystic.

The tomb of Sidi Zazour is a great resort for sick people, who desire to be healed of their diseases. Many miracles are said to be wrought there. It is indeed a wonderful place, this old tomb where the marabout lies, out in the middle of the river-bed. For the guardian told us, and the same tale was told in Biskra by a young educated Arab who held a post under the French Government, that however high the river may rise, even when it washes the walls of the little building, and beats against them, it never enters the openings in the stone which form the windows. The gaudy coverings of the catafalque are not even splashed. This is by the natives looked upon as a marvellous miracle. To more sceptical minds the rounded back of the building that is set against the rush of the waters, and the low protecting stone wall upon one side, suggest an explanation of the mystery.

This protection is necessary, for the Oued Biskra is very strong when it is in flood. Only a year ago a terrible thing happened. The river had come down, bringing with it a quantity of wood, which, when the water had dried up, was left upon its stony bed; numbers of women and children came down to gather

it, for wood is a most precious thing in the little villages of the Sahara. Suddenly, whilst they were all busy and unheeding, the river rose again; a great wave came rushing down with tremendous force. In an instant a swirling torrent swept down the dry river bed, and thirty-one women and children were borne to their death. But all the time, in the middle of the rushing waters, the old marabout slept untouched and unharmed within his little green railing.

Each marabout has his feast day, and every January there is a great feast made for Sidi Zazour. For weeks beforehand the people go round begging for money wherewith to purchase a cow to be offered as a sacrifice to the saint. The poor little animal, one of the pretty grey natives, of the breed so closely resembling a Jersey, is led round the villages by the collectors. It is a pathetic sight.

At last the great Friday arrives. For once in the year the solitary life of the old guardian of the tomb is broken in upon. His meditations and prayers, and doubtless his sleep, are disturbed. It is a wonderful day for him.

Hundreds of people assemble in the dry bed of the river. The silent tomb is invaded by the worshippers, who bring offerings to Sidi Zazour, couscous and candles, barley and dates. The little grey cow is slain, and its flesh eaten by the worshippers.<sup>1</sup> It is an

<sup>1</sup> This may be a rain sacrifice. Mr. Foster Fraser mentions a similar rite which he saw performed at Sidi Okba upon the anniversary of the Saint's death in September. A bull was hobbled and lying upon the ground. A young Arab sharpened a knife, which he stuck into the neck of the prostrate beast; then withdrawing the knife he sharpened it again, and repeated the horrible operation several times, each plunge of the instrument into the poor brute's neck being accompanied by frenzied shrieks of delight from the spectators. Afterwards the animal was taken away, cut up and distributed to the poor, while the marks of the blood upon the ground were carefully covered up.

act of communion or joint participation with the marabout in the flesh and blood of the sacred victim. The marabout accepts the sacrifice, and gives to the partakers in it prosperity and the benefits of his *baraka*.

There is a great deal of dancing—this has generally formed a part of primitive religious ceremonies—and much rejoicing. The old guardian of the tomb makes coffee for the worshippers, accepts the offerings on behalf of the marabout, and acts as host.

The scene is a strange one. A pagan rite Islamised; the desire for sacrifice and communion with a higher being continuing on through the ages. From time immemorial those wonderful mountains, the Aures, have been watching the same scenes of sacrifice, whether enacted in the worship of Baal or in the worship of Allah. Evening after evening, the peaks and valleys of the mountains have been illuminated with an unspeakable glory; evening after evening the darkness has descended, and the secrets which they seem to hide remain for evermore unrevealed to man.

In all North Africa there is nothing more beautiful than the sight of the Aures at sunset. Nowhere, perhaps, does the departing sun touch the earth more tenderly, nowhere is its good-night kiss more exquisite, more lingering, or the darkening light so full of yearning beauty and mystery. As the light dies, in the marvellous hush of the supreme moment when it meets the night, a soft pall of crumpled velvet seems to descend upon the mountains, concealing their naked peaks with its warm colour, covering the valleys with the purple shadows of its thick folds.

The faces of the little company returning from bathing in the healing waters of Hammam Salahin,





IN A PALM GARDEN

or the Holy Baths, are set towards the hills, the golden light is in their eyes, the wonderful silence wraps them round as with a garment. Natives there are, whole families sometimes, the women mounted upon small donkeys, the men either riding behind or walking beside the animals. The women and girls of a rich Arab family are packed away inside a little covered carriage, closely screened from view by carpets and curtains which are hung all round. "They are well hidden," remarks the head of the family, with a half-scornful, half-amused smile of satisfaction. Then he tucks the curtain down carefully, and proceeds to climb up into the front of the carriage with the only favoured child of the family, his little son. He probably ignores it, for surely it cannot be that he has no suspicion of the peeping and spying that goes on, literally behind his back, as his carriage passes the little horse-tram plying between Hammam es Salahin and Biskra. Closely packed inside, it contains, besides natives, some Europeans, a glimpse of whom is worth the risk of punishment. The temptation, at any rate, is too great a one for the secluded Arab women to resist.

. . . . .

A strange sense of mystery broods in the palm gardens.<sup>1</sup> Passing from the glare and sultry dryness of the sandy road into the moist shadow and the coolness within the low mud walls, one becomes vaguely conscious of it. The monotony of the tall straight trees is broken sometimes by groups of olives. Their gnarled and twisted trunks and pale tinted foliage make a delicious harmony when they blend with the richer green and the upright stems of the palms. The

<sup>1</sup> The palm tree is the familiar symbol of Astarte. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 193.)

light is dim and restful; the sun, tempered by the umbrella-like tops of the trees, flickers through the branches, making bright patches upon the ground. Now and then a dark-skinned figure moves across from the sunlight into the shadow; an Arab boy tending a few goats, or a young girl in brightly-hued garments. Perhaps a little nigger will climb up the long fan-like leaves of a young palm, and sliding down again, grin for pure joy of heart, and show his white teeth, with a child-like desire for your admiration of his feat.

The very spirit of the little Sahara villages seems to dwell in the palm gardens. It is an ancient spirit, and one that has never been Islamised. Here one can fancy still lingers the subtle atmosphere of a primitive nature-worship. The great rugged stems of the trees are the pillars of a temple not made with hands, and their branches its only covering.

The fertilising of the palm is an artificial process. Some spores of the beautiful polished ivory blossoms of the male tree, when the long sheath in which they are enfolded has burst, are hung among the branches of the female palm, so that the pollen falls upon the flowers, thus rendering them fruitful.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes amongst the branches of the trees you may still see suspended a bundle of whitened bones, all that remains of a camel's skull. It was fastened there when the garden was first planted, as a charm to bring fruitfulness and prosperity.<sup>2</sup> Often, in new gardens,

<sup>1</sup> It seems possible that the symbol painted and carved upon so many of the houses, &c., in North Africa, and frequently found in Moorish arabesques, is really the sheath of the male palm, as an emblem of fruitfulness. ("Signs and Symbols," Fig. 27.)

<sup>2</sup> Amongst the Semites the magical use of a dried head had great vogue. (Robertson Smith.) Cf. p. 7.





A CORNER OF OLD BISKRA

the weird thing hangs intact—survival of an ancient faith, its original meaning now long forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Many quaint legends and stories belonging to a similar primitive cult are still told in North Africa, handed down orally through the ages, gathering grains from the different stages of civilisation through which they have passed, as a rolling snowball gathers snow. Now, as only the learned are able to read the Qu'ran, its all-embracing covers are said by the people to contain every legend which is known to them. In primitive times these legends formed part of religion; vaguely they remain so, and the Jew, who has from time immemorial been hated, and is so still, generally plays the part of the villain in them.

The following story is a characteristic one, and was told us by a young Arab in most dramatic manner.

One day a Jew went out to hunt; after pursuing for hours, and having seen and killed nothing, he gave up the chase and returned home to dinner. On the way he met a gazelle and was going to kill it. But in old times all the animals used to talk, and the gazelle said, "Let me first go and say good-bye to my children." So she went home and gave her children suck, and told them, "After this I must go and die." The children said, "We will go with you." Then they all went to the home of Sidi Mohammed to take refuge.

And the Jew came there and said, "Give me my gazelle." But the Prophet would not give it up. Then the Jew made ready to loose his dog and his falcon, in order to kill the gazelle. But Mohammed said to them, "If you kill the gazelle, I will put you

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be more or less a local custom, or at any rate one belonging only to certain districts. At Bou Saada, an Arab village 150 miles from Algiers, instead of hanging up the camel's skull the owner kills a goat, or sometimes a cock, in the garden, and he and all his family feast there upon the flesh of the victim.

into the fire." So the dog and the falcon, when they were loosed, were unable to touch the gazelle.

Then Sidi Ali, the Prophet's nephew, gave the Jew a smack upon the side of the face, and he fell down and presently fell asleep. And when he was asleep he dreamed. And in his dream he saw paradise and the fire.

And after that he turned Arab, and whereas before he had not believed in paradise and the fire, afterwards he believed. And when he died he went to paradise.

## CHAPTER VI

### A SHRINE IN THE DESERT

THE Ziban<sup>1</sup> are that chain of oases which, extending to the east and west of Biskra, its capital, lie at the feet of the Aures Mountains: Chetma with its 18,000 palms, whose houses are taller than those of any of the others, Droh, Seriana, and, in the far distance, Garta, to the right El Amri and Filiash.

There is a strange fascination in these little villages, with their streams of water, their palm gardens, and brown earthen houses. All of them have these points of resemblance. Each has its own individuality and point of difference. Some are quite tiny; a few by comparison are large. Most of them are unknown to history, and have never been heard of outside the region of the Ziban. But one at least has this peculiarity, that it possesses a history, and that its fame has spread beyond North Africa, out into the Mohammedan world. For with it is connected, and it takes its name from, one of the first men who tried to force Islamism upon the Berbers at the point of the sword, Sidi Okba. In the forty-seventh year of the Hejira (A.D. 668), Sidi Okba, the great Arab general, at the head of a small body of horsemen went forth at the bidding of the Khalif Moaouia to conquer Africa. The Berbers have always been a difficult race to subdue. The Romans had taken two hundred years to do it. But Sidi Okba's conquest of them, if only a temporary, was at any rate a rapid one. He must have been a man of extraordi-

<sup>1</sup> Ziban is the plural of Zab, a village.

nary power and wonderful, if cruel and savage, bravery. On he went, carrying everything before him, forcing the faith of the Prophet at the point of the sword, until at last he reached Kairouan. There he established his rule, founded a capital, and went on in search of further conquests.

But as he was returning, he was attacked by the Berbers of the Aures Mountains and killed near Biskra. His followers, seeing that defeat was inevitable, broke their swords and gave up their lives with him. Long afterwards, when the Arabs had conquered North Africa, they wished to build a mosque to his memory, upon the place where he was killed ; but they were not sure of the exact spot. Legend says it was revealed to them in a miraculous manner. A stranger came one day to the inhabitants of the region and told them to plant some palm shoots ; the one which grew would, he said, point out the spot which they desired to know. And a stranger, as I have said before, being frequently looked upon as a sorcerer, the advice was thought worth carrying out.<sup>1</sup> Presently one of the shoots began to sprout ; so there the Arabs erected a mosque to the memory of the great marauder, warlike disciple of the Prophet. It was the first mosque built in North Africa which still remains standing.

Upon the new road made by the French from Biskra to Sidi Okba upon the edge of the Sahara there is always much native life moving. Stretching out in one direction unbroken to the horizon lies the desert, in this region stony and covered thickly with patches of rough scrub and camel's salad ; the dunes and the real sand only begin somewhat farther to the south and south-east. In the distance, dotted here and

<sup>1</sup> Louis Créput, *Kairouan, Ses Mosquées, ses Légendes*.



AT SIDI OKBA



there, lie the little villages of the Ziban, watched over by the range of the Aures Mountains.

Now and then upon the sky-line black spots come into sight, which are camels. In the immense space of the desert, when there is no possibility of comparing the size of one object with another, the sense of proportion is lost. Even from a short distance the camels look quite small, while from afar off apparently every detail of their shape is clearly defined; the fact being that it is very difficult to judge distance at all in the vast plain.

It is only possible to realise the size of these huge animals when a group of them comes down towards you upon the road. As they pass with slow, padding footsteps, and necks outstretched in that peculiar way which, when they are far away, makes them resemble ostriches, they seem to dominate space instead of being annihilated by it. They belong so essentially to the desert, these queer creatures, which have never really been tamed.<sup>1</sup> With a curious air of detachment, they submit, it is true, but the submission is merely a scornful acquiescence, given just because circumstances are too strong for them. It is too much trouble to fight; and, after all, what is the use? Their whole bearing is expressive of this attitude. The eye of the camel has something of the mystery of the desert in its gaze, as though the animal were possessed of some strange knowledge—saw some strange vision. There is something of weary wonder, too, that the world should be so out of joint; something of longing for liberty and space. Now and then this silent acceptance of fate breaks down. When the hand of man touches it, or when it is forced to kneel in order to

<sup>1</sup> In the Qu'ran, the institution of camels to ride upon is mentioned as an example of God's wisdom and kindness to men.

receive its load, then the camel cries out. And of all cries that are uttered in the world, the camel's voices the most angry rebellion and the bitterest despair. It is full of desolation and agony. But the cry is soon over. Then once more the great animal rises, takes up its burden, and with "patient, deep disdain" goes its way upon the road.

At times its endless journeys are interrupted. Nature steps in for a little while, and the female camel instead of being the slave of man becomes the centre of an admiring circle. Such an occasion is being celebrated in one of the villages of the Ziban, at Chetma.

It is evening, and a caravan of Bedouins has just come in, and is resting in the little market-place after the long day. The animals have been unloaded; three or four women are sitting upon the packs that lie upon the ground. They are clad in dark blue and red garments of their own dyeing, and have massive head-dresses and silver ear-rings. Two of them have small babies in their arms. There is a look of great weariness in the faces of the mothers. Both must have been handsome once, but though they are still quite young, perhaps not more than twenty-three, they are worn, and tired, and old-looking. Men are standing talking, or sitting upon the ground at rest. Children are playing round about. It is a peaceful scene and a picturesque one. The centre of the group is a huge camel that is lying down, perfectly motionless, except for, now and then, a slow movement of the head, when its baby, aged twenty-four hours, strays behind its back and goes out of sight.

The latter is the queerest and most fascinating little creature imaginable, of a pale dove-grey colour. Its enormously long wobbly legs support a small body

about the size of that of a very attenuated calf ; its tiny head is set upon a neck that is out of all proportion in length. It shambles round amongst the Arabs, investigating the strange world and the strange people to which it has been so lately introduced ; blundering unsteadily first up against this person and then against that. When it strays too far away, a man will pick it up in his arms and set it down again beside its mother. It is absolutely fearless, for it knows nothing to fear.

The same look is in the eyes of the Arab woman when she gazes down at her baby, and in the eyes of the camel as it glances round at its little one ; a look that seems to contain something of hopeless resignation, something of divine pity, something of shy wonder at having brought its helpless offspring into such an uncomfortable world.

As we journey upon the road to Sidi Okba many groups pass us. A Bedouin family is on the move. The wife and a boy are huddled up on the back of a diminutive donkey, which is driven by a huge Arab. The animal trots bravely along despite its miserably thin condition. The tall figure, stick in hand, walking behind is like some implacable and relentless Fate, from which it cannot escape. Three or four women follow with that frightened walk, which is half a run, of the Arab women. Thick plaits of black wool in semblance of hair hang over their ears. The scanty skirt clinging to their spare forms accentuates the grace of their figures and movements. But they also seem to be borne along in the train of that central figure of stern Fate.

Here and there upon the track are the beds of little streams with stony bottoms. The ground is covered in places with a white powder, that glitters like hoar frost, and is saltpetre.

The road stretches on between the stony edges of the desert. The dark patch which has appeared so small becomes larger and larger, until the fringed foliage of the palms stands clearly outlined against the sky.

It is the oasis of Sidi Okba, the ancient Roman Thabudei.

. . . . .

The Moslem religion, which directs and regulates each detail of everyday life, has had necessarily a crystallising effect upon the manners and customs of its followers. In so far as civilisation is concerned, the life of the people of the desert is much the same as it was during the Prophet's lifetime. Approaching Sidi Okba one is possessed with a sense of being in another age than this, and the sensation is not without justification.

Outside a house at the entrance to the village is standing a camel with a queer-looking bundle lying across its back. It is the body of a man who has been shot in the desert. Robbery doubtless has been the motive for the crime. He has just been brought in wrapped up in his own burnous. His head hangs down over the side of the animal. There is not any crowd; no one takes much notice. The event has apparently created no excitement, and the animal, with its ghastly burden, is standing quietly outside a house, into which the driver has gone, presumably to tell the news.

The atmosphere of Sidi Okba and of most of the Arab villages is like that of a dream, weird and strange, the only familiar objects being the pigeons that wheel round and round and settle upon the roofs.

It is a village of sand. You walk upon sand,

between high, windowless houses, built of bricks<sup>1</sup> of sunburnt sand. Upon either side of the narrow streets are little open stalls and shops: the baker's with its piles of flat, round cakes of Arab bread; vegetable stalls poorly supplied with scarce and precious greenstuff. Here and there, looking strangely out of place, a few things of European manufacture are offered for sale: cotton shirts, and handkerchiefs or pieces of brightly hued stuff, chiefly red and orange, for the Arabs love gaudy colours, for making into gandouras for the boys.

A butcher's shop is always an unsavoury thing, but more unpleasant perhaps than any others are those of the Arab villages. For the recently decapitated heads of the unfortunate goats lie all around, and the camel meat displayed upon the small open stalls is literally black with flies. All day long the owner of the shop sits cross-legged behind his counter, flicking them off with a flag-shaped fan made of grass, or a little brush of palm twigs. The flies crawl upon everything, especially over the faces of the children. The mothers neglect to brush them off; presently the skin becomes callous, and the damage is done. The proportion in the Arab villages of people who have lost either an eye or are totally blind must be about one in three. It is a piteous sight; more so when one thinks that in many or in most cases the evil might have been prevented. The glare and heat and the sand play, of course, a

<sup>1</sup> The sand has much gypsum in its composition, and makes good sun-baked bricks. The gypsum or selenite in the sand which makes the bricks has also another effect in the Sahara. Crystallised by water, it forms what are called Sahara Roses, or Roses of Sand, which are of various sizes and forms, some of them resembling a camellia, some a cluster of petals. They are not common, and are occasionally very beautiful. The same results of crystallisation are found elsewhere, at Fontainebleau, and nearer home still, between Herne Bay and Reculver; the form of crystallisation and the colour are different, but the practical results the same.

large part in the mischief done ; but water is scarce and valuable, and the neglect of cleanliness and the flies play a larger. The religious ablutions necessary before prayer might, one thinks, obviate a great deal of the evil amongst the boys, but these are only begun at an age when it is probably too late.<sup>1</sup>

As in all the Arab villages, so at Sidi Okba the life of the male part of the population is lived chiefly in the cafés or the streets. Groups of men are talking, and playing chess or dominoes ; for though gambling and games of chance are strictly forbidden in the Qu'ran, several of the learned have deemed these games lawful as having a tendency to quicken the understanding.<sup>2</sup>

The men of the Sahara have a splendid physique, with strong, handsome faces and well-cut features ; and the Arab dress must surely be the most picturesque and becoming upon the face of the earth. From a little earthen house in Sidi Okba a man will come out, throw his burnous round him in the fashion which is so imposing, and walk down the sandy street with the proud bearing and haughtiness of a king. Of such savage grandeur one can imagine the great Arab general himself to have been.

The atmosphere of solemnity and poetry pervading the mosque that has been raised over his tomb is savage also. Savage and defiant were Sidi Okba's

<sup>1</sup> At Bou Saada I gave our boy guide some permanganate of potash for washing his baby sister's eyes, which already showed signs of mischief, and have since had a grateful letter from him saying that it had been used, and that the eyes were completely cured.

<sup>2</sup> "It is abominable to play at chess, dice, or any other game, for if anything be staked, it is gambling. If, on the other hand, nothing be hazarded, it is useless and vain." It has also been said, "If a man play at chess for a stake, it destroys the integrity of his character ; but if he do not play for a stake, the integrity of his character is not affected." (Hamilton's *Hictayah*, vol. iv. p. 122.)

words of challenge when his course of conquest was arrested by the waters of the Atlantic: "God of Mohammed, were I not stopped by the waves of the sea, I would go into the most distant countries, to carry there the glory of Thy Name, to fight for Thy religion, and to annihilate those who did not believe in Thee." And when the marauding zealot was at last laid low, savage, with a simple grandeur, half defiant still, was the inscription carved presently, in rude but beautiful Cufic characters, upon one of the pillars in his mosque :

"This is the tomb of Okba, son of Nafi.  
May God have mercy upon him."

. . . . .

There is a fascination that never grows stale in the whitewashed mosques of North Africa ; in the coolness and repose, after the heat and glare outside, of the small buildings ; the absence of any jarring element of sight or sound. Half obscured in the gloom, white figures move softly over the matting or carpet ; stand silently before the *Mihrab*, the most holy place, or kneel beside the shrine of their saint.

The tomb of Sidi Okba is hidden behind a screen in the north-west corner of the mosque. Through the small grille the faithful gaze in adoration, for the door is only thrown open upon certain days. The catafalque is veiled with the usual coloured silk coverings, chiefly of red and green. The small space surrounding it is hung with banners and quaint pictures, a great brown wooden rosary and the ostrich eggs and amulets brought as votive offerings by the pilgrims. Whether the tomb is empty, or whether it really contains the body of the fierce follower of the Prophet, is doubtful. In any case, numberless miracles of healing are said to be worked at the shrine. Why

not? Throughout the Ziban the faith of the people in the power of their saint is boundless.

In all the larger villages of North Africa there are French schools. Otherwise all the teaching, amounting generally to instruction in reading and writing verses of the Qu'ran, centres round the mosque. Connected with the mosque are native schools; and naturally the larger the mosque, and the more important the village, the more extensive is the teaching carried on.

At Sidi Okba in the dim light, amongst the rude clay pillars imitating stone columns, many a class is held. A dozen young Arabs are sitting round their teacher, cross-legged upon the floor, learning portions of the Qu'ran. The low buzz of their monotonous voices seems rather to mingle with the silence than to break it. In the *Mçalla* or room adjoining the mosque, another class of four young Kabyles is being held. Their bodies sway backwards and forwards rhythmically as they repeat the words of their lesson in unison. Again—it is the Qu'ran; always, and only it is the Qu'ran.

Yet another school there is, attached to the mosque of Sidi Okba, for little boys. In the low-roofed room three masters have been teaching, holding separate classes in different corners of the room. Now the lessons are over. Two of the teachers have already fallen asleep, each one lying upon the floor, wrapped round with his burnous. Two or three small scholars, presumably the dunces or naughty ones, are still sitting cross-legged upon the matting, laboriously copying lines of writing. The others are all leaving; one by one they bend down and kiss their master's foot before they go. A wag amongst them with a wink walks down the room, grinning and swaggering, and

twisting an imaginary moustache. They all rush down the steps shouting and laughing; not quite so boisterously as English boys in the same circumstances perhaps, but with very evident joy that their lessons are finished for the day. "The human boy" is the same animal all the world over.

As the cottages of an English country village nestle close to their little church, radiating from it as their centre, and forming with it a complete whole, so the sun-baked houses of the Arab village cluster round their mosque. As the steeple or tower of the church is in England, so is the minaret of the mosque in North Africa. It dominates the more lowly dwellings lying at its feet; it overlooks and shadows them, lifting its head higher and more proudly than they lift theirs. These points the English church and the Arab mosque have in common. Other points they have of variance.

The relation between the church and the English village is much less intimate than that which exists between the mosque and the Arab Zab. The beautiful and often fine architecture of the church has little in common with the thatched cottage and the small brick and plaster houses dotted round about it. The building is so much grander, generally so much more ancient, so much more magnificent than the poor ones in whose midst it is set. It stands apart and aloof, as might some great personage, who can only be approached upon great occasions; who, in some special hour of rejoicing or of sorrow, mingles with his humbler brethren; but who bears little part in their everyday life.

In the Arab village this is all different. The mosque and small houses which surround it are com-

posed of much the same material. Generally, if not always, they are built of the same sunburnt brick or sand. The mosque, indeed, is larger and whiter than the houses; nearly always it is whiter. The whole village may be of the same monotonous brown, and the mosque the only white thing in it.

And when you have said this, you have practically said everything. There is no grandeur of architecture; no special beauty of structure to distinguish it from the houses. It is just the best and the largest building in the place. That is all. There is something that is often very touching in this. Every house in a little village is made of brown earth or mud, and the mosque is made of mud also; only occasionally upon the small square minaret there may perhaps be some rude attempt at a pattern worked and moulded in the clay.

It is always worth while climbing the narrow, broken stairway of a minaret in North Africa. The one at Sidi Okba is said to tremble visibly when the name of that ferocious saint is invoked in a special form of words, "Tizaabit-el-ras Sidi Okba." Much trembling, one thinks, would cause the tower to fall, it is so slightly built. But doubtless, though legend stops short at relating the fact, the same power that causes it to tremble goes on to steady it again afterwards. And so it has remained standing through the centuries.

A great deal of the scene upon which one is looking when at last the little gallery at the top is reached, must still be the same as it was when the village was first built. True, the railway has come within fifteen miles of Sidi Okba; there is even a sewing-machine or two in the place—the people of North Africa have taken kindly to sewing-machines; but the Oriental life has changed

very little through the ages. To the followers of the Qu'ran, indeed, there is no room for change, or perhaps any need for it.

And so from the windows at the top of the minaret you may gaze down upon the flat chimneyless roofs of the houses, which look like so many brown boxes turned upside down, and watch the people walking about the sandy streets dressed in just the same way as they were in the time of the Prophet. From one of the small square doorways in Sidi Okba, or in any other of the villages of the Ziban, Mohammed himself might come out, throw his burnous round him with a proud sweep of the arm, and mingle with the crowd outside just as does the Arab we are watching from the minaret to-day. If the Prophet could return to earth again, and visit the villages of North Africa, he would feel quite at home there ; the life going on would all be quite familiar to him. For the precepts of the Qu'ran have become crystallised into customs. The only way in which it seems possible for change or progress to arrive, is for religion and the Qu'ran to go.

Meanwhile, looking down from the minaret upon the strange scene of which the mosque of Sidi Okba is the picturesque centre, one gets slight outside glimpses of a life whose fashion in many ways is older even than the Qu'ran itself. Women and children come out of the little mud dwellings into their small enclosed courtyards, and sit and spin or play. The bright and even gaudy colours of their garments make them look like so many gay butterflies upon a dust-heap. On a flat roof, which is separated from us by a monotonous perspective of similar ones, a woman is hanging out a red carpet. She has been dipping it with a dye of that peculiar dull bluish-red that is so common in this part of the country ; a colour which,

apart from its surroundings, is neither an artistic nor a good one.

Upon another roof another woman is walking, with her baby in her arms. Tired of the confinement of the house, she has crept up the narrow earthen staircase, that leads from the dwelling-room to the house-top, in search doubtless of air and variety of scene.

Upon one side of Sidi Okba lie the everlasting hills, the Aures Mountains ; upon the other the desert, flat and unbroken for hundreds of miles. An unceasing monotony of brown meets the eye : brown houses, brown walls, brown streets, brown landscape. Not a flower ; no gardens, no grass, no vegetation, no bushes or shrubs ; nothing tender, nothing green, but the thick fringe of palms lying between the village and the desert, and here and there a solitary fig-tree, looking as though it had lost its way. All nature, and the life that is so intimately bound up with it, is stern, harsh, and austere.

The unfamiliar atmosphere of a dream indeed clings to these self-sufficient, self-contained villages of the Ziban. Their inhabitants are born, amuse themselves, suffer and die upon the small circumscribed stage of their lives, unheeding, and apparently unknowing that there is any other larger stage upon which other people are playing other parts. Standing upon the minaret of the mosque at Sidi Okba, you seem to be received into the same atmosphere, to be so cut off and isolated as to forget that any other place in the world exists, or matters, or ever has mattered.

It is somewhat startling suddenly to be asked by the young Arab at your side, "What is the population of London ?" He had been talking a little about the mosque, pointing out by name the other oases lying in the distance, and answering



A STREET AT SIDI OKBA



CHILDREN OF THE DESERT



a question or two. For some little time he had taken no initiative in the conversation, but had been standing in contemplative silence, looking all the time as though he had walked out of a coloured picture in some Bible story-book. Now he asks, "What is the population of London?" Finding it impossible to follow the sequence of his thought, and still wondering at the why and the wherefore of the unexpected irrelevant question, we answer that the population of London is six millions. There is a moment's silence; then—"Sidi Okba is six thousand," he says.

And now you understand why he asked the question. He wanted to compare them—Sidi Okba and London. There is something, in his tone, of disappointment, mixed with the simplicity of the remark. It makes one wish that one had not been obliged to answer him. One feels sorry.

He goes on to say that he has a brother in New York, and that he thinks of going there himself next year. And somehow, though perhaps it is foolish, one is still sorry. What, one wonders, will be the feelings of this young Arab on reaching New York and finding himself in the vortex of its hurrying, noisy, busy life. When the small brown town that has so long formed the boundary of his horizon, and in which he feels such simple pride, has receded into the distance, will it be forgotten? or will he sometimes hunger for the life of the desert; for its silence and its space and its freedom? Will he miss the voice of his father, calling the muezzin from the little minaret day and night with monotonous regularity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The five periods of prayer are: (1) From dawn to sunrise; (2) When the sun has begun to decline; (3) Mid-way between numbers two and four; (4) A few minutes after sunset; (5) When the night has closed in. Three others are voluntary: (1) When the sun has well risen; (2) About 11 o'clock A.M.; (3) After midnight.

Or will the sound of the trams and the motors, the hurrying feet, and the roar of the great city obliterate that once familiar sound from his memory? We may wonder and speculate about it all; we do not know. For between our thoughts and the thoughts of these children of the desert there can be but little similarity.

Amongst the younger generation of men and boys there is certainly a stirring, and longing for a different life. Their thoughts are tending towards Europe and civilisation; they are stretching out their hands in yearning for the farther shore. What they may feel about it all when they have attained this desire remains a problem.

“Still bent to make some port, he knows not where,  
Still standing for some false impossible shore,  
And sterner comes the roar of sea and wind,  
And through the deepening gloom,  
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,  
And he too disappears and comes no more.”

Now as we stand upon the top of the little minaret thinking about it all and wondering, the father of the young Arab has climbed the narrow stairway and is calling the prayer of the *Maghreb*.<sup>1</sup> From the four sides of the small square tower goes forth the weird cry, the cry that has been sounding on through the centuries, ever since it was first uttered by Bitl, the first fruits of Abyssinia, who was ransomed by Abu Bakr, the father of Mohammed's child-wife, Ayishah.

“La ilah ill'allah wa Mohammed rassoul 'ullah”  
(There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet).

The sound dies away. The sun sinks over the

<sup>1</sup> The prayer at sunset. “Observe prayer at sunset, till the first darkening of the night.”

Ziban, and the old man creeps down the narrow staircase once more.

"The callers to prayer may expect paradise, and whoever serves in the office for seven years shall be saved from hell-fire."

Such was the promise of the Prophet. It was only by an act of special grace that the number of prayers was reduced to five. The tradition runs as follows:—

The divine injunctions for prayer were originally fifty times a day. Mohammed said: "As I passed Moses in heaven during my ascent, Moses said to me, 'What have you been ordered?' I replied, 'Fifty times.' Then Moses said, 'Verily your people will never be able to bear it, for I tried the children of Israel with fifty times a day, but they could not manage it.' Then I returned to the Lord and asked for some remission, and ten prayers were taken off. Then I pleaded again. And ten more were remitted. And so on until they were reduced to five times! Then I went to Moses and he said, 'And how many prayers have you been ordered?' And I replied, 'Five.' And Moses said, 'Verily, I tried the children of Israel with even five times, but it did not succeed.' But I said, 'I have asked until I am quite ashamed, and I cannot ask again.'"<sup>1</sup>

So five it remains, though, judging by the remarks made to us upon the subject by an Arab, Moses was not far wrong in his estimate of the followers of the Prophet.

The Arab in question was one of our companions during the drive in the so-called diligence from Medjezel-Bab to Teboursouk, and was a rich landed proprietor on his way to visit his property. He knew a certain amount of French, and was fairly communicative

<sup>1</sup> Hughes' *Dictionary of Islam*

during the long journey. We were speaking of the mosques and the marabouts which we passed upon the road, and the Mohammedan custom of praying there, whereupon he scornfully assured us that he did not follow it. He did not agree with that sort of thing; he should pray when he was old (he was a middle-aged man). There was time enough for that; for the present he had other things to do.

## CHAPTER VII

### SLA-EL-KEBIRA

THE English Christmas is near at hand, and the great Mohammedan feast of Aid-el-Kebir is near also. Within a few days, hundreds of sheep will be slain in the little villages lying upon the fringe of the Sahara. Every family able to afford it will kill and eat a whole sheep; the poor will be content with a small portion of mutton.

In many of the sun-baked houses a lamb is being fattened for the great day. It has been petted, led about, and fed from the hands or pockets, and has even slept in the room of the family that so soon will sacrifice it.

And now in the streets of Old Biskra the school-boys are going from house to house singing and asking for gifts. Their schoolmaster, a bright-faced little man, sits, huddled up in his burnous, on a very small donkey, waiting to see what each mud-house will yield. The boys have dressed themselves up for the occasion, with gaudy turbans upon their heads. When they receive a gift, a few dates perhaps or a handful of barley, they take it to their master. The offerings are put into the panniers which hang over the donkey's sides.

Farther down the same narrow streets are groups of girls. They also are gaily dressed up. Each one wears some ornament of barbaric jewellery, ear-rings or brooch. Their song promises the advent of a boy baby to each one who desires it, as the reward for generosity shown to themselves.

Muharram,<sup>1</sup> the first month in the Mohammedan year, has begun, and the great day of the feast draws near.<sup>2</sup> The night before it is as warm as a summer day in England. The moon is full, and the sky sown thick with stars. The air is heavy with the intoxicating scent of mimosa.<sup>3</sup> From the scented silence under the alley of trees stretching from one end of French Biskra to the other, you pass into the noise of the town and the Arab streets. From every house comes the sound of music and singing, that sound of pipes and tom-toms which is so intimately bound up with one's memories of North Africa. The cafés are all brilliantly lighted and crowded with people.

To the right of Old Biskra, upon the road that leads out from the modern to the old town, there is a sandy hill, crowned by some ruins. Tales are told by the natives of treasure having been found there. This may or may not be true. Treasure is always supposed by the Arabs to have been found in connection with any building which to them is surrounded by mystery. The Byzantines had a fort here in the fifth century; upon the massive stones of its base, which is all that now remains of the Roman fort, the Turks, when they came to North Africa in the fifteenth century, raised another fort. Now this one also has fallen into decay. And close by, a little stone pulpit or mimbar stands. For upon this spot is held the Sla-el-Kebira, the Great Prayer of the Mohammedan feast.

After the beautiful night the day dawns bright and clear. Already, at an early hour, many of the wor-

<sup>1</sup> Both in pagan and Mohammedan times it has been held unlawful to go to war in this month.

<sup>2</sup> The tenth of the month.

<sup>3</sup> The natives mix the dried flowers of this tree with spices to make incense. Cf. p. 362.

shippers are assembled, and are sitting upon the ground before the mimbar, or standing about amongst the fallen stones of the old fort. The sky is of an intense blue, unflecked by the smallest cloud. Behind, as you stand upon the hill, looking towards the town, lie the Sahara and the Aures. At your feet is sand ; below, the road winds down into Biskra, with palms upon either side. Far away upon the sky-line in one direction are more palms. Dark patches stain the monotonous brown of the desert ; they are the oases, the villages from which many of the worshippers are coming.

Group after group mount the hill, singing as they walk ; white-robed men with dark strong faces. When they reach the summit they take their places upon the ground. Many are already seated. Now and then one amongst them arrives upon a small donkey. Generally they are on foot. Sometimes, flitting about in the midst of the tall white figures of the men, are little boys in bright orange or yellow or red gandouras. A huge Arab is leading five little children. At some distance off, some veiled women are seated. They are all old. The younger women are exempt from any necessity for prayer ; those said by their husbands are sufficient for both. Only the old women or widows join in the prayer, and these sit apart from the men.

Now there is a hushed silence ; an atmosphere of expectation grows amongst the hundreds of white-robed, hooded figures seated in long lines in front of the little stone pulpit. The marabout is coming. A carriage drives up the hill, and a small man in white gets out of it. He is to conduct the prayer.

The great marabout of Biskra is one of the here-

ditary marabouts about whom I have already spoken. They are very rich, combining a worldly power with the religious influence. Sometimes the religious and sometimes the worldly side predominates.

With the great marabout of Biskra, the former characteristic has the ascendancy. As he comes down from his carriage and walks towards the waiting and expectant crowd, he seems to diffuse a spiritual atmosphere. As you look at him you love him. He is very aged, very feeble, and very small. He is bent almost double, and leans upon a stick. His face is very pale; it is a beautiful face, spiritual, refined, gentle, and dignified.

He takes up his position looking towards Mecca, upon a carpet that is spread for him upon the ground, near the mimbar. And the prayer begins.

"Alahou Akbar—Alahou Akbar." The long lines of standing worshippers take up the words after the marabout with a low, vibrant murmur. The sound is like the low growl of distant thunder. "Alahou Akbar—Alahou Akbar." Again and again the cry goes up in unison, and the worshippers bow themselves low, as the rushes on the river bank bend before the wind. Then, lower still, till their foreheads touch the ground; and once more the rhythmical cry rolls down the long lines of men. "Alahou Akbar." Still kneeling, each man joins his hands together, touches his face, and kisses his fingers. "Alahou Akbar."<sup>1</sup>

And now for a moment there is silence. The low, murmuring growl of the prayer has died away; the last sound of it has pulsated down upon the still morning air. The marabout leaves his carpet, and mounts

<sup>1</sup> The five rak'a or positions of prayer are: 1st, giyam, upright; 2nd, roukou, hands on knees; 3rd, i'tadâl, upright; 4th, soudjoûd, face on earth; 5th, djoutoûs, sitting.



RAK'A GIYAM



ROUKOU



SODJOURD  
THE GREAT PRAYER



the little stone pulpit. As he does so, the people crowd and press round him. For virtue will go out from him ; to kiss or to touch him will bring *baraka* to the person who is fortunate enough to do either. The marabout of Biskra is accompanied by two tall men, who guard him lest the press of the people should injure him as he mounts the pulpit. When he has reached it he hangs his handkerchief over the side that the worshippers may touch it.

Then he preaches to them, and reads portions of the Qu'ran.

A sympathetic electric thrill goes through the crowd ; one is conscious of the emotional touch. " It is our God that they are praying to. He hears them." This commonplace admission uttered by a Christian bystander and his patronising comment jar, and are strangely out of place. So also are the stand cameras, which some tourists have set up right in front, and within sight of the worshippers. One longs to get away from all these people who do their best to make the place like a racecourse, and to destroy the poetry and solemnity of the scene.

For it is a solemn scene, and an impressive and emotional one, and one never to be forgotten. The great congregation, the white-robed, hooded men, seated in hundreds, almost in thousands upon the ground, the cloudless blue sky, the hush, the upturned faces with concentrated gaze ; and far away, reaching out it would seem into infinity, the desert. Then—the small white figure of the marabout in his stone pulpit. His face is wonderfully sweet, and filled with religious fervour and enthusiasm, and quiet grandeur. In Biskra, the character is given to him of peacemaker. He is said to be a wise adviser in matrimonial difficulties and differences, and to be so good and kind,

that even the children run to him for comfort. One can well believe it. One wonders whether there can be any point of resemblance between the old man and his son, a man of about twenty-five, who will in his turn become marabout of Biskra, who has at present the decadent, somewhat coarse appearance of so many of the rich young Arabs.

And now it is all finished. Two Arabs go round making a collection amongst the worshippers and the strangers who are present. This money will be given to the poor.

The marabout comes down from the mimbar. The congregation crowd round to greet him, and each other ; to shake hands and give the kiss of peace. It is a time of general goodwill. One cannot help wishing this could be the end of the feast, for hitherto all has been full of poetry and solemnity and grandeur.

But, alas, it is only the beginning. The Sla-el-Kebira, the Great Prayer is over, the second part of the Aïd-el-Kebir has yet to come. The worshippers separate. Group after group pass down the hill. The ground that was crowded a few minutes before becomes empty ; the roads are dotted with white figures making their way home. Now, the sheep that has fed almost at its owner's table for months, or was carried home upon the back of mule or donkey the evening before, will be brought out. The sacrifice will begin.

A lamb for a house. It is the old idea of propitiation by blood—the blood of an innocent victim. The times of the Mussulman and the Jewish Feasts are different, but the feasts bear a striking resemblance to each other ; this is especially the case with the Feast of Sheep, and the Jewish Passover. In the one point at least they are identical. “They shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts, and on the

upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it." This is done also by the natives of North Africa after the slaying of the sheep. It is not an invariable practice, because, as in all religions, so in Islamism, some of the followers are strict about ceremonials, others are careless. With regard to this particular custom it is difficult to arrive at the truth. The natives are reticent upon the subject when questioned, and personal observation is not easy, because, when the ceremony is observed, it is upon the *inside* of the door-posts that the blood is sprinkled.

The same difficulty is experienced in finding out much about a still more curious rite connected with the sacrifice of the sheep. Some of the natives profess to know nothing about the custom; others, who have possibly a right to speak, are reticent. We have been told by some that the last meal given to the sheep just before it is killed is barley, and that after the animal's death the undigested grain is taken from its stomach, and offered as food to Allah. This custom is remarkable, because the Passover was always at the beginning of barley harvest, when the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God.

One thing at least the feasts of all religions have in common,—the day is one of rejoicing. The rest of the day of the Aïd-el-Kebir is observed as a general holiday. Every one puts on new clothes. It is a time of merry-making and gaiety, for the children as well as for the grown-up people. The cafés are crowded, and the town is noisy with the sound of Oriental music, the beating of tom-toms and the weird, compelling music of the pipes. The children come in for their share of the fun and are taken up and down, and round the village for a penny, in omnibuses hired for the purpose.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TOLGA

PEOPLE whose experience of camel-riding has been gained in Egypt will find the performance a very different thing in North Africa. In Egypt, camel-riding by Europeans is taken as a matter of course, and it is provided for—the animals are furnished with comfortable saddles. In North Africa the number of visitors who either desire or find it necessary to ride camels is extremely small. Those, therefore, who wish to do so must take things as they find them, and not expect to find any arrangements made for their comfort. Instead of the easy saddle of Egypt, in North Africa there is probably only a pack to sit upon. Instead of the camel that has been properly trained for European riding, the traveller has to put up with the ordinary animal belonging to a caravan.

Yet, after all, it is worth while, for no amount of discomfort, and no number of difficulties to be overcome, can lessen the wonders of the desert. When you have mastered the art of mounting the groaning, grunting, refractory creature ; when your bones have grown accustomed to the hardness of your seat ; and your body has learned to sway with the strange movements of the creature, then you can settle down to drink in the marvellous charm, and learn something of the spirit of the Sahara.

The murmur of living, the stir of existence, the hoarse cries of the market at Biskra die away into the distance. The scattered groups of people whom you





A TRACK IN THE DESERT

overtake upon the road near the village become fewer. Presently the palm-trees of the oasis are left behind, and the distant ones of Chetma and Filiash grow more distant still.

To the right are mountains. All around is a sandy, stony waste, sprinkled with scrubby bushes, tufts of fennel, and bunches of camel's salad. And stretching far away beyond the horizon are the countless miles of the great desert, with the sand dunes of Oumache just visible enough to give you a glimpse of what real sand can be. Tolga, the Arab Zab or village, which, with the surrounding oases in this part of the Sahara, gives the district the name of the Ziban, lies twenty-five miles ahead. This is the goal of our journey. And a long day's work is before us.

The pace of our caravan is determined by the camels, whose queer ship-like rolling movements cover the distance of only two miles an hour. The mules, nothing loth, accommodate their steps to this, generally going either a little in front or lagging a few yards behind, for in common with horses they have an extraordinary dislike to the near proximity of camels.

The men in charge of the animals walk beside them ; the guide rides a small donkey, and is furnished with a pistol. His brother, a handsome young Arab of about twenty-four, carries a long-barrelled gun. These guns are in general use among the natives of the Sahara. Doubtless, besides their use for the chase, they are sometimes necessary in case of an attack for the purpose of robbery. Failing a gun, the native carries a knife in a rough wooden sheath, or a heavy club-like stick, studded with nails, in size and weight something like a Penang lawyer.

But except occasionally, in cases of famine, the traveller upon the Tolga road is safe enough. In times of actual distress for food, the natives sometimes get desperate. The diligence, a clumsy, slow-travelling cart which takes the mail, and carries passengers, has been attacked during a season of scarcity. The people of the Sahara have so little to live upon, and for that little are so absolutely dependent upon the earth, and what it will yield, that a bad season and failure of the all-important former and latter rain simply spell starvation.

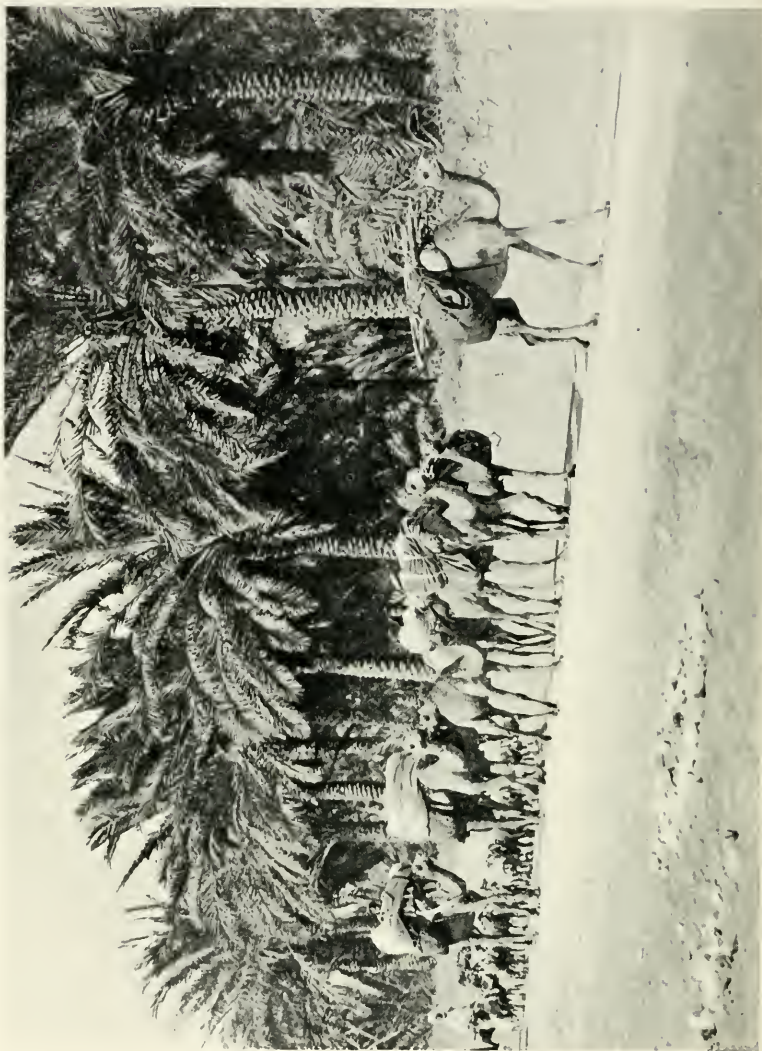
A pathetic little drama, showing what hunger can really mean, was acted before our eyes during the journey to Tolga.

Our caravan had halted for lunch near a small café or rest-house just off the track, built for the French soldiers, when they pass over the desert. Here was water for the animals; here the Arabs could obtain coffee. The morning had been long, we had started early, and were quite ready for food.

Just as we had finished, and when there was nothing left but a few scraps, an emaciated cat crept round from behind the hut. We gave it a chicken bone, which it pounced upon joyfully. Instantly, a still more starved-looking dog, who had been watching us from a distance, not being able yet to make up its mind whether we were really to be treated as friends, dashed forward and seized the bone from the cat. The next moment an Arab who was passing, and who, unnoticed by us, had also been watching, rushed at the dog, took the bone actually out of its mouth, and began ravenously gnawing it himself.

To such terrible lengths can hunger and starvation go in the Sahara. As this state of things is the result of drought, and the absence of rain, what wonder





A. CABAYAN

that the miraculous power of bringing the blessing is one of the attributes with which the marabout is most frequently credited.

One of our guides is about to be married. He has tired of his first wife, who had annoyed him by her habit of giving some of the money that he allowed her, to her relations. So he had divorced her, according to custom, by the payment of six francs to the Kadi of the village. He has waited the prescribed time, which in his case happens to be a very short one. The law decrees that a man may not divorce his wife and marry again during the same year. So if the divorce can be arranged to take place in December, the re-marriage may be in January.

As they walk beside the camels of our caravan, the Arabs practise the weird, barbaric music of the marriage song. A line or verse is sung by the prospective bridegroom, which is answered or followed by his friends and relations in unison. This goes on, over and over again, in endless repetition. The half-melancholy music, punctuated by the crack of gun and pistol shots, is in keeping with the scene. The minor chords of it belong to the mysterious harmony of the half-savage native life. But when it has continued for almost an hour without cessation, the monotony of the sounds at last grows to be almost unbearable. One welcomes something else that may possibly occupy the thoughts and the voices of the Arabs.

And presently the relief comes, for a wonderful echo claims their attention. The men shout and whistle, and fire off guns to scare perhaps the mocking spirit who is answering them. For the firing of guns is thought to drive away the demons. Over and over

again from the distant Aures Mountains the sound comes back with perfect and unusual repetition.

A few moments later there is another illusion, and one which might well fill the primitive mind first with expectation and then with awe. In the misty distance to the left of our pathway, there is a vision of water, with palm-trees growing near it; cool, shining, beautiful water, like a lake or a river with flat banks. It looks so clear, and distinct, so altogether delightful, that after a long journey across the desert, one can imagine how the tired camels would long to turn aside and press on towards it. The nearer we approached, the farther it seemed to recede; until at last, when we were upon a line with the place where it had seemed to be, the beautiful mirage vanished altogether.

It is drawing towards evening. A falcon crosses our pathway seeking its rest in the mountains. A countless number of small birds are gathered together in a balloon-like cloud. The dark faintly outlined form spreads out, draws together again, and floats away into the pale light of the sunset. Right across the saffron sky a pink cloud lies outstretched like a rosy wing. As the light dies in the west, the moon rises at our backs, appearing slowly from behind the dark mountains, until gradually, like a great silver globe, it sails fully into sight. The shadows lengthen out, and lie black in the moonlight over the sand.

The camels still move on slowly with rhythmical swinging gait. The mules either go just ahead or follow them. The singing has begun again—that monotonous cadence of the marriage song so like a Gregorian chant. All through the long hours of the day nothing seems to have changed or moved, excepting only the sun. But now there are palms outlined against the sky, the sure sign of a village

in the Ziban of the Sahara. In the almost departed light a little wayside cemetery is just visible—a few mounds of sand and sunburnt bricks. There is nothing to enclose the spot; the graves mingle untouched and unmolested with the sand of the desert.

Now the oasis is close at hand. The guide has ridden on to give notice of our approach. In the darkness no friendly lights from the houses are visible, shining to mark the presence of habitations as in the English village. There is a total absence of windows on the outside of the native houses. The only lights that stream out into the narrow streets of Tolga, are from the doors of the little Moorish cafés and the windows of the small French hotel. The Hôtel des Touristes was a blemish in the picture, but it was one which we accepted in a spirit of resignation, as it enabled us to sleep the night in peace in this little out-of-the-way Arab place.

The host spoke to us of "the season." Upon being asked, "When was that?" he answered, "Now."

There was distinct pathos in the statement, we ourselves at that moment being the only guests in the hotel. Upon this point, however, we felt a selfish and unreasoning gladness. But it was difficult to believe that three or four visitors could constitute a "season," any more than the proverbial swallow can make a summer. Hôtel des Touristes—the name alone had filled us with apprehension; were the name borne out in fact, the charm of Tolga would practically have vanished, for at present the people are unspoilt; they are friendly and hospitable, and have not learnt to look upon a stranger as their natural prey. The children do not beg. One is free from the annoyance of being pestered for "soudi," to which one is continually subjected at Biskra.

The European in Tolga is an anomaly, and the prosaic garments of civilisation are a terrible blot upon the picture. Should you chance to meet a figure so clothed in Tolga, this truth is forcibly borne in upon you, though possibly the painfulness of it may be tempered by the fact of his being an Englishman, and the thought that you yourself form equally another blot.

But such trifles as these are forgotten, when presently you stand in the moonlight upon the "balcony" of the little hotel, and look down over the flat-roofed Arab village lying wrapt in the mysterious death-like silence of the desert. Not a human being moves in the quiet streets. There is no sound but the barking of dogs, or perhaps far off the sweet melancholy music of a pipe. Great groups of palm-trees are massed darkly against the sky. Tolga is set in a forest of palms. In the distance, above the trees, rise the mountains, and stretching out into apparent infinity is the desert.

For a few hours Tolga sleeps ; but it is only for a few hours. The time "between the twilights" is very short. At sunrise once more the people will come out from the brown houses ; some to pursue their simple occupations, some to tramp off across the desert to a distant village, some just to lie down and go to sleep again outside in the shade. The flies, too, will wake up once more, and crawl over everything. And the daily life of the village will begin, and continue all over again, just as it has begun and continued every morning for centuries.

Upon the outskirts of Tolga an artesian well has been sunk. An Arab found the water by means of the divining rod, and, having found it, offered to sell the precious secret for 60,000 francs. The local Kadi,



TOLGA



being possessed of great riches, and having in addition a certain amount of European scientific knowledge, paid the money, and caused the well to be sunk. He then gave half the water to the village in exchange for a large tract of land, which he is now developing and planting. The stream is turned alternately upon his ground and towards the village.

A great fountain of crystal ice-cold water bubbles up from the well, rises into the air, falls, and runs down into the trenches. A couple of Arab children are sitting by the fountain dabbling and splashing in it in the way that all children love. It is Christmas time, but the heat of the sun is so great that one would gladly seek the shade if there happened to be any. During the summer in Tolga the heat is so intense, that all the natives who are able, go away into the mountains. Only the poorest remain in the village all the year round and sleep in the little shelters upon the roofs. To these people this fountain of water must be of more importance than everything else in the world.

Within the reach of the water the land is green and fruitful. Corn and beans, and young palm-trees, are flourishing. Just beyond lies the desert; the stony and arid waste. The contrast is extraordinary and definitely marked. As one stood within that small green enclosure, listening to the delicious gurgle of the fountain, one realised the beauty and the value of water as one had never done before. Upon the great Sahara water is not something to be taken merely as a matter of course, but a rare and precious thing, even a sacred one.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it: the princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their slaves" (Num. xxi. 17, 18).

It has always been so in the East. The fountain is treated as a living thing ; those properties of its water which we call natural are regarded as manifestations of a Divine life, and the source itself is honoured as a Divine being.<sup>1</sup>

There are evidences of the Roman occupation at Tolga. Many of the sunburnt brick or earthen houses of the natives are raised upon splendidly laid and well-cut stones, sometimes of five or six feet long, and two feet deep, while close to the mosque, the remains of a fortress may be traced. Concerning these remains many fabulous tales have been invented by the Arabs, the innocent credulity of some of them being quite enchanting.

A cleft in the side-post of an old stone gateway, obviously the slot in which the gate or door was hung, is pointed out with great pride. It is said to have been cut by a single blow from the sword of Sidi Abdullah, who, legend relates, led the Arabs against the invasion of the Byzantine king. A blow from the same mighty sword is said to have cleft the great gorge of El Kantara, near Biskra, in order that the Arab army might pass safely through.

Over an arched gateway at Tolga there is a hole in the wall clearly intended to carry a halter or rope for tethering a horse. It exactly resembles the numerous holes made for that purpose existing in what was once the refectory of the Tebessa monastery.<sup>2</sup> We were told quite seriously at Tolga, that the soldiers of the Arab army put up their hands as they passed under the low doorway, and thus the hole was made in the stone arch.

Many wonderful tales and legends cluster round

<sup>1</sup> Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* p. 230.

the names of Sidi Abdullah and of Sidi Ali, the cousin of the Prophet who married his daughter Fatimah. Sidi Abdullah is for some reason greatly revered at Tolga. I mentioned them both to a native of the place. Sidi Abdullah he spoke of with great pride, and seemed to think that he had been at Tolga. But "Sidi Ali never was here," he said.

Both Sidi Abdullah and Sidi Ali are frequently the heroes of the quaint, semi-sacred, coloured pictures which adorn the Moorish cafés, the houses of rich Mohammedans, and occasionally even mosques and marabouts. Some of these pictures are cheap reproductions "made in Germany," presumably of quaint originals, and are extremely interesting as instances of primitive art. Others are hand-painted with great care and patient labour. These latter are generally executed by Turks, and are brought by the pilgrims from Mecca, and are difficult to find. We succeeded in obtaining possession of two, one of which is reproduced.<sup>1</sup> We also saw a very interesting hand-painted specimen in the house of the great marabout of Tolga, to whom I have already alluded.

His son came to call upon us, and invited us to have coffee and left his father's card, a European piece of pasteboard, bearing the name of Abdelmajid ben Cheick Sidi Ali ben Amor. We accepted the invitation, and in the afternoon went down the narrow brown street of the village to the marabout's house, which adjoined the mosque and zaouia. A doorway so low that you must stoop to enter it, led down a narrow passage into the courtyard adjoining the house. In this courtyard there was a large sheep. It belonged to the marabout's

<sup>1</sup> Four Perfect Khalifahs—Ali, Othman, Omar, Abou Bekr. Hassan, son of Ali, the small figure, was offered the Khalifate, but refused it, and for this reason is depicted standing by his horse instead of being mounted.

little grandson, and was quite tame. Its ears were hung with numbers of small brass chains ; tassels of coloured wool adorned its fleece, which was stained with henna. It was a queer-looking object. Some steps upon the left of the courtyard led up to a small room. This was the office or bureau of the marabout.

The room was curious only because of the anomalous description of its furniture and ornaments. Coloured oleographs in common gilt frames, and all manner of trumpery, things of European manufacture jostled each other upon the walls. A small cupboard, its panels painted alternately with horseshoes and crescents, supported some shelves which were filled with various copies of the Qu'ran. Over this, fastened to the wall, hung a couple of extremely ugly gas burners, useless certainly, there being no gas in Tolga, and, therefore, I presume, considered to be ornamental. The marabout's son exhibited with pride an inkstand made of shells, the kind of thing that you can, but do not, buy at Margate. It was evidently one of his most treasured possessions.

The room was uninteresting and somewhat vulgar. It was not, however, so much the trumperiness of the things contained in it which caused this impression, but the total lack of taste displayed in their arrangement, and the entire absence of any artistic feeling. I could not help comparing it with the underground cave dwelling-rooms of the people of Matmata, of which I shall speak later.<sup>1</sup> There, also, many of the things were trumpery to the last degree, but the atmosphere of those little rooms was reposeful—they were invested with simple poetry. The difference between them and the ugly, vulgar room in which the marabout's son received us at Tolga, was the difference

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 444.



ON THE WAY FROM TOLCA



between the pretty flagged kitchens of the English cottage, and its hideous, unliveable "parlour."

The only characteristic object bearing any real interest in this room, was the picture to which I have already alluded.<sup>1</sup> It was executed in a sort of iridescent paint, of bright colours, and represented Mecca and Medina. Underneath the sacred Kaaba of Mecca were two mythical figures with their hands joined; they had the faces of women; each had four wings, two springing from the heads, and two from the shoulders, with which the draped bodies were covered. They are called *Buruk*. Mounted upon them, Sidi Ali and Sidi Abdullah are said to have been sent from Mecca, travelling the distance in one day, to help Sidi Okba against the Roman King of Tunisia. May there not be some analogy between this legend, and that of the great Twin Brethren who were sent to aid the Romans at Lake Regillus, in their battle against the Etruscans. The mixed creature or *Buruk* seems to be the same as the Cherub, or the personification of the thunderstorm upon which Jehovah is said to ride. Cherubim with a flaming sword, which is the lightning, kept the gate of the Garden of Eden. *Berk* is the Arabic word for lightning, *Buruk* being the plural form of the word. *Barak*, the Hebrew proper name which appears in the Bible, and the Sidonian name Barca, which was the family name of Hannibal, also signify lightning.

As symbols of awful power embodying the primitive terror of the thunderstorm, the cherubims are represented under the form of mixed figures, embracing the attributes of the wisdom of man, the kingliness of the lion, the strength of the ox, and the swiftness of the eagle. These symbols all appear in the Buruks; the

human head, the lion's tail, the cloven feet, and the wings.

Crouched upon the floor in Oriental fashion, the marabout's son gave us coffee, and then took us to visit his father.

The marabout of Tolga, and of the Zaouia, is a magnificent-looking old man, the exact opposite in appearance and characteristics to the marabout of Biskra. Both men are personalities; both possess a grand dignity of bearing. But the marabout of Biskra, as I have already said, is small and gentle-looking, and has a spiritual, almost an ascetic appearance, while the marabout of Tolga is a man of great, almost gigantic height, and has a proud manner, which one can readily conceive might become overbearing. He is obviously a man of the world; a man of affairs. We found him in a small room surrounded by his council, a group of elderly men who were all sitting round him upon the floor. He gave us a kind reception, asking us how long we were staying in Tolga. The interview had something of the nature of a royal reception. The marabout only said a few words, and then shook hands and dismissed us.

The eldest sons of the marabouts of Tolga, and also of Biskra, who will eventually inherit their titles and offices, bear no outward resemblance whatever to their fathers. The younger men seem to have lost that dignity and grandeur of bearing, the inheritance of an ancient race, which is possessed by the elder men. They have instead an unpleasant and distinctly decadent air. The dissimilarity between the fathers and sons cannot be attributed to the difference in age. One wonders whether to look for it in the fact of the European influence, and in the difference between the education of the two generations; possibly in the



A HALT BY THE WAY



adoption of absinthe by the younger one. Whatever the reason of it may be, the result is very noticeable.

Change will doubtless in time come to Tolga, wrought by the European element, with its necessarily mixed influence for good and evil. But at present it is difficult to realise even the possibility of any radical alteration. As one passes through the quaint narrow streets of the little brown village, bathed in the exquisite evening light, one cannot really find it in one's heart to desire it. At that supreme moment of beauty the assurance of the advantages that European civilisation may possibly bring, is swallowed up in the thought of what it must certainly spoil.

Once more, the winding, irregular stair of an Arab mosque is climbed, the broken floor of the minaret is reached. Tolga, with its clustered mass of flat sun-burnt houses, is spread out at our feet, isolated and self-centred, and buried in the desert.

At the corner of every flat roof stands a round pot, which was let into the earthen brickwork when the house was built. It is to hold the libation of camels' blood, or bones or incense, offered to Allah by the family, as a preservative perhaps against evil, and to bring luck to the house.<sup>1</sup>

The sky is crimson in the west above the great golden globe that is slowly sinking to rest behind the palm-trees. The goats are coming in from the mountains where they have been all day. As they pass up the narrow street, one after another detaches itself from the rest; each animal upon reaching its home runs into the open door of the house, where it shares the life of the family. I have seen the same thing in

<sup>1</sup> For this custom, common in some districts of North Africa, and almost or quite unknown in others, we were able to discover no satisfactory reason for, or explanation of, but the cauldron was said to be a marabout.

Spain, when the little brown pigs are brought home at night by the man who undertakes to collect them all. Each one scuttles into its respective home, squeaking and scrambling up the door-step, apparently delighted to find itself there once more. It is worth while walking down the steep cobbled streets of some of the small Spanish towns at sunset, just to see the sight.

Now, a breathless silence rests over Tolga. The little Arab village seems to be all alone in the world, or rather to constitute the world with no other outside it. Suddenly, the sun drops, and the grey of the southern sky turns to pink. The Arab, who is patiently waiting in the minaret, calls the muezzin. Once more the weird cry goes out from the four windows of the mosque. At Tolga all the earth seems to be silent to listen to that cry. For a moment, a great darkness descends upon the desert—then, suddenly, the moon sails out from behind the clouds. As we reach the silent street again, a long line of camels is winding its way in slowly, with soft padding feet, that are fashioned for the desert, and not for man-made roads. Great empty boxes which have been full of dates hang upon their sides. You have to stand aside to let them pass in the narrow pathway, with outstretched necks and noses scenting the air.

Beyond Tolga the great desert sleeps in mysterious silence. And to all outward appearance the little village lying upon its bosom sleeps also.

## CHAPTER IX

### DEATH AND JUDGMENT

IN each little village upon the Sahara all the buildings are brown ; the pale brown of dry sun-baked sand, the mosque alone being generally of glistening white : so it is at Old Biskra.

Inside the mosque everything is white also, a white of different tones. There is the dead grey white of the bare, washed walls ; the yellowish white of the garments of the priest, sitting high up in the mimbar ; the white of those of the worshippers. And all this white serves to throw up in strong contrast the concentrated colour of the coverings of the dead.

Silent, and apparently unheeded, behind the long rows of muttering worshippers, three corpses lie under the gaudily striped palls of red and yellow—each one upon a separate wooden bier. Beneath the thin covering, the shape of the face and the sharp outline of the nose of each are plainly visible. Ten hours ago each of those quiet forms was a living, breathing, human being. Now they lie waiting for the hurried burial of the East.

The relatives of the dead, with dishevelled garments and turbans untwisted, kneel apart. Presently, the priest descends from the mimbar, and prostrates himself before the mirhab in the direction of Mecca.

“ Alahou Akbar, Alahou Akbar ! ” Now the service is over. Four times the monotonous and ever familiar repetition vibrates through the building. The words die away into a pathetic silence as the worshippers turn upwards the biers, raise them, place them before the

mirhab, and crowd round them with muttered prayers. Then each is lifted shoulder-high, and the silent burdens are borne away once more from the cool dimness of the mosque, into the blinding glare of the sun.

Two of the dead are taken to the little graveyard close by. The other is carried down the narrow streets of the village, between the high brown earthen walls, towards the larger cemetery. This lies beside the high-road to Biskra.

The little procession winds its way onwards. They walk fast ; for, pertinently said the Prophet, it is good to carry the dead quickly to the grave, to cause the righteous person to arrive soon at happiness ; and if he is a bad one, it is well to put wickedness away from one's shoulders. Behind, come a dozen or two of white-robed men, like cowed monks, the family of the dead ; and the paid mourners who utter weird and melancholy sounds of grief.

The bearers are continually changed, for the carrying of a corpse is considered a meritorious action. Soon the high walls of the village are left behind ; the palms of Biskra come into view ; the encircling range of the Aures Mountains, and the desert. About half a mile of dusty road has to be traversed ; and the cemetery is reached.

Until now, the women have been walking in the procession with the men. Arrived at the graveyard, they separate themselves, and remain behind. For women must not follow the dead to the grave-side. They must not join in the prayers. They sit down under some palm-trees upon the edge of the cemetery, and the procession passes on, leaving them alone.

Two little girls are sobbing bitterly, with loud heartrending cries. Their grief is real and pitiful. One has thrown her shawl over her head ; the other

covers her face with her hands. That silent form under the gay covering is their mother. Now they are left desolate. Their father will take another wife, perhaps even two. So they sit sobbing, with the abandonment of sorrow, under the palm-trees. And the sad procession passes on whither they must not follow it.

The suffering that is real must remain afar off. The husband, indeed, with bowed head stands somewhat apart near the grave, but the melancholy howling, continuing all the time that it is being prepared, has no meaning in it.

The grave is lined with sun-dried bricks. Some of the people standing by help to fetch them from a pile that is lying a little distance off. Pieces of wood are placed across the top to form a hollow, in order that the dead may sit up with ease to be examined by the recording angels, Mounkar and Nakir. An upright brick is placed at the head and feet for the angels to sit upon during the dread interview. When all is finished the body of the dead woman, fully dressed, is lowered into the ground and laid upon its back with the feet towards Mecca.

"We commit thee to earth in the name of God, and in the religion of the Prophet." Four men, each taking a corner of the gaudy red and yellow covering, hold it over the grave while the prayers for the dead are said. "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar!"

All is over. The mourners move away in twos and threes, talking as they go. Only the little girls are left behind the palm-trees afar off, still sobbing aloud in their desolation.

A short time ago a man was buried in one of the villages of the Ziban. His dog, unnoticed, had followed

the sad procession to the cemetery. Perhaps, like the little girls, this faithful friend also had remained watching from a distance. When his master was laid in the ground, and the people had moved away, the dog crept up close, and lay down beside the grave. Presently, some animal bit the face of the man in the grave; and, uttering a faint cry, he stirred—for he was not dead. Unconsciousness had been mistaken for death; and the hasty burial had taken place.

The dog was down in an instant tearing and scratching at the earth with his paws; whining and barking in frantic joy. In a few minutes the man was released, and climbed out of the grave and walked to his house. When his relations had recovered from their fright and surprise at his wonderful resurrection, they made a great feast to celebrate it.

The dog and his owner, the latter with the marks of the bite still upon his face, and the scratches made by the faithful animal who had saved his life, are still to be seen at Oumache, such is the story that was told us, as living witnesses of the truth of the story.

The funeral processions in North Africa, partly from necessity and partly perhaps in recognition of a reproof delivered by the Prophet, always walk to the cemetery. "Have you no shame since God's angels go on foot, and you go upon the backs of quadrupeds?"

Wonderfully haunting and pathetic is the solemn drone of the chant,<sup>1</sup> heard first of all afar off, then coming nearer and nearer; mingling with the tramp of the slippered feet as the crowd passes you; and

<sup>1</sup> In many places in Algeria upon the way to the grave, they recite the poem called *La Borda*, by the celebrated *El Boncere*, which is counted amongst the sacred books. The part towards the end, although very few people are aware of it, is the lament of the poet for his dead mistress. (E. Doutté.)

then dying away gradually, until the sound sinks into silence in the distance.

Down the main street at Constantine these processions, with short intervals between them, are incessant at certain hours. Groups of white-robed figures, a wooden bier borne high in their midst, the outline of the face and form scarcely concealed by its bright-coloured pall, file quickly past. Every moment the bearers are changed, as the dead are carried swiftly down the hill of the Condiat Atty to the cemetery.

. . . . .

The Moslem does not plant trees in the cemeteries ; neither does he write things upon the graves. In the spring-time, it may be, soft grass tenderly covers the mounds, and the spaces between them. Wild flowers of many colours make bright patches amongst the green ; and all looks bright and hopeful. But this does not last. The summer comes. The flowers fade and the grass dries up and withers, and dies in the hot sun. The ground becomes dry and crumbling, and the graves which are not covered by a tombstone become nothing but naked heaps of broken earth.

"It is written—it is finished. If it is broken—it is broken," says the Arab, and the words describe the attitude of his mind and character. The very name of his religion signifies fatalism and total absence of energy and initiative. The Arab does a little work, and Nature, if she is beneficent, accepts the scanty aid that he gives to her, and feeds him. If she is cruel, he starves. So it is with the graves, with the slight difference, that in this case Nature works entirely alone.

But the Moslem does not forget his dead. On the contrary, he respects them and constantly visits the place where they are laid.

A strange pathos and fascination surrounds the

graveyards of North Africa. It lies partly perhaps in their simplicity, partly in their unexpectedness and picturesqueness, and a great deal in something that is illusive and indescribable. They are seldom enclosed. The little sandy mounds of the great cemetery at Biskra mingle almost with the road. Sometimes the cemeteries are just a spot in the desert. Sometimes the graves nestle against the walls of the sand-baked houses, as in the English cottages rose-trees and wall-flowers will. Death is a familiar thing to the inhabitants of those brown villages.

The little flat white tombstones possess a peculiar interest. Their shape and design vary in different districts; but in each graveyard it is generally uniform.

Sometimes a wedge-shaped headstone stands upon the grave; frequently the place is marked by little white-washed cones, or the tomb of a man is distinguished by a couple of small pillars of about a foot high, standing upon the flat ledger. Generally the little pillar is crowned by a turban, roughly carved in stone<sup>1</sup> and painted green or red, the colours of the Prophet. Sometimes the grave of a woman is marked by two small rounded pieces of stone either painted or left plain, representing the head-dress or *Ras Kofia* of the native of North Africa.

The signs and symbols in low relief upon the tombstones are all survivals of a primitive and pagan cult. The same are found upon the houses, and are worked into the stucco arabesques which adorn the rich mosques and large buildings. Their original meaning is unknown to the people who continue to

<sup>1</sup> The Mohammedan attaches extraordinary importance to his head-dress. One of the four peculiar things said to have been bestowed upon him by God was that his turban should be unto him as a diadem.

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use them. Now they are employed simply as decoration, or perhaps more frequently as talismans.

This applies in a sense to a very curious survival which is found in the Mohammedan graveyards. Upon most of the flat tombstones in North Africa there is a round hole cut out in the stone of about five or six inches in diameter and about three inches deep. So generally is this adopted, and so completely has its real significance been lost, that in one instance I have seen it upon a Christian tombstone which happened to have been the work of a Moslem stonemason.<sup>1</sup>

The somewhat vague reason for these holes in the tombstones given by some of the natives when questioned provides a clue probably to their original meaning. The explanation is in all cases much the same, though it varies in form and actual words. As with so many of these survivals, the presence of the holes seems to be taken by them simply as a matter of course.

They are "for the birds," they say. When it rains, the holes become full of water: "The birds come and drink, and sing songs of thankfulness." This is "good for the dead, and good for the birds." Sometimes the natives put a few crumbs in the hole which the birds come and eat. The explanation is invariably the same. "It is good for the dead," and "It is good also for the birds," they add sometimes.

There is much of beauty and poetry in the idea, which is also intensely interesting. For it probably contains the survival of an early pagan belief.

The Egyptians held that the soul of the dead person escaped and rose to heaven in the form of a

<sup>1</sup> The tombstone is in the wall of the cemetery surrounding the English church at Tunis. It was made in the seventeenth century. ("Signs and Symbols," Fig. 30.)

bird. In the case of a king, it was invariably a sparrow-hawk. With ordinary mortals the soul took the form of the so-called *ba*, a human-headed bird, sometimes possessing human arms. It was generally in early times a male bird, for the Egyptians were accustomed to think of the dead in the next world as male, even though that person happened to be, in this life, a woman.

At any moment, it was thought, the soul-bird might desire to revisit its body lying in the tomb. But the body might conceivably decay, or even be lost; then the soul would be unable to find it; and would wander long and hopelessly in search. And so, in order that this might not happen, the ancient Egyptians placed in the tomb carved figures of the dead person. These they believed and hoped the soul-bird, should it return, would mistake for its former body, and thus feel satisfied and at home. They also placed food in the graves in case the soul should be hungry.

As time went on perhaps this idea of the soul-bird's return to visit the body was lost sight of; but yet there remained a dim recollection of some bird that came to the graves. Then gradually, though it still lived on, even this belief grew more and more vague, until now it seems to survive only in this indefinite fancy that birds may come to the spot where the dead are laid; that if they come they will be glad of food and water; moreover, that the act of feeding them, and giving them to drink, as the people say, is "good for the birds, and good also for the dead."

Another custom having no relation to the Moham-medan religion is fairly common in North Africa. Upon many of the tombs may be seen lying a little pile of

stones. They have been put there one by one by those who passed by, the action being influenced perhaps by the idea contained in sympathetic magic that evil is thereby transferred from the thrower to the deceased, or possibly as an offering to the *manes* of the dead.<sup>1</sup>

In the graveyards there is generally the tomb of a marabout ; a square white building with a domed roof. This has rendered the place sacred. One by one the humbler graves gather round it.

Once there was an old marabout who lived at Tunis. He had chosen the spot where he wished to be buried in the quiet cemetery upon the hill above the Kasba. Perhaps he had not so definitely established his right to the character of marabout as to be certain that the people would build a Kouba over him. Therefore he began to build it for himself. But he could not afford to spend any money upon it, for he was very poor. So every time he could find a piece of broken china, or a morsel of coloured tile, he took it up to the graveyard ; then with some cement and a few stones plastered together he began to make the walls of his tomb.

The building grew and grew. Day after day he toiled up the hill with his bit of china or scrap of tile and added it to the patchwork covering of the wall. Then he would stand and admire his work. It was very beautiful, he thought. But he was very old ; each day he was getting more feeble. He must make haste to finish his tomb. He worked hard. Three of the four walls were finished. The fourth was begun. Then one day he died.

His father had been buried in another part of the

<sup>1</sup> The custom is a very widespread one all over the world, the reasons for it differing probably in different places.

cemetery, so they laid the old man there, instead of on the spot which he had chosen for himself.

Now nothing remains of the work over which he spent so many years but a bit of fallen wall stuck over with broken tiles and pieces of china of many colours. The weeds have grown up and almost hidden it. And the old man sleeps somewhere else.

. . . . .

The Arabs have many stories referring to the end of the world.

The world is said to be round and flat, and divided in half by an iron wall forty-five metres in thickness. Upon one side are the human beings ; upon the other are thousands of pigmies, who desire to get to the men, in order to destroy them. The pigmies have always been licking the iron wall with their tongues. At last they will have licked it so thin that it is only the thickness of a piece of the thinnest paper. There is some one over them, who will not let them break through this wall ; but on a certain day they will be allowed to do so. Then they will find the sea between them and the human beings. But the pigmies are so numerous that they will drink the sea dry, and then be able to get at the human race.

This story evidently refers to Gog and Magog, who are spoken of in the Old and New Testament,<sup>1</sup> and of whom wonderful things are related also in the Qu'ran. In this book one of the signs of the end of the world is said to be the breaking forth from their confinement of these barbarians, who, having passed the Lake of Tiberias, which the vanguard of their vast army will drink dry, will proceed to Jerusalem. These people, it is said, were wont to make irruptions into the neighbouring

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxviii. 2, xxxix. 1, 6 ; Rev. xx. 8.

countries in the spring-time and to destroy and carry off all the fruits of the earth.

Against them, and between two great mountains in Armenia and Adherbigân, Dhu 'lkarnein, or the "Two-horned," built a great wall.<sup>1</sup> The people who were suffering from the incursions offered to pay a tribute on condition that Dhu 'lkarnein built this protecting rampart.

And he answered: "The power wherewith my Lord hath strengthened me is better than your tribute; but assist me strenuously, and I will set a strong wall between you and them. Bring me iron<sup>2</sup> in large pieces, until it fill up the space between the two sides of these mountains." Wherefore, when the wall was finished, Gog and Magog could not scale it; neither could they dig through it. And Dhu 'lkarnein said, "This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the prediction of my Lord shall come to be fulfilled, he shall reduce the wall to dust; and the prediction of my Lord is true."

Another tale I have found amongst the natives is that the pigmies are always tunnelling through a great mountain, which separates them from human beings. But as they will not say *Inshallah*, or "if God wills," all that they do during the day gets filled up at night. One day a child will be born whose name will be *Inshallah*. So, in calling the child by its name, "Inshallah, Inshallah," they will utter the fateful word. The spell will be broken, and they will be able to do what they wish.

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators think Dhu 'lkarnein to have been Alexander the Great. Others consider him to have belonged to a much earlier date, and to have been one of the Kings of Persia of the first race.

<sup>2</sup> Probably because of the superstitious awe, alluded to elsewhere, with which iron is regarded, and the power over the spirits with which it is credited.

This story and the former one, and also the gazelle story given elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> were related by a young Arab as he walked with us on the Tolga road one evening. Now and then he would stand still to emphasise what he was saying with dramatic gesture—he was a born story-teller—and our interest in hearing the tales increased his interest and enthusiasm in telling. Once he took the walking-stick from my hand and drew figures in the sand to illustrate his meaning. His tales, he assured me, were all from the Qu'ran; for, as I have remarked elsewhere, the Mussulman of North Africa supposes that all the folk-tales with which he is familiar have their origin in the sacred book, or are connected in some roundabout way with the religion of the Prophet.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 371.

## CHAPTER X

### "O BAAL, HEAR US"

"O BAAL, hear us." The echo perhaps of this remote and terrible cry is still sounding down through the ages. "They cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets." Traces of that dread worship are thought to be still surviving even in Europe, in generally unrecognised forms in later religions. M. Doutté thinks that they are found in the worship of the Aïssaouas. It was the cult of the sun, which was worshipped by the ancients under different names. Among the Libyans, the race to which the natives of North Africa belong, the god was called Hammon or Baal Amon.

He was the giver of life. And as his life meant the life of the world, equally so his death was the cause of death. In the time of the world's childhood, the annual death of the sun was a disaster, inspiring absolute terror. It signified the sterilisation of the earth, the apparent death of all nature and vegetation—possibly even of all living creatures. When gradually the green things drooped, and faded, and died, and the earth became dry and barren, man in his childish ignorance was filled with dread. The fear of finality seized him. For even he himself might become the victim of this universal death.

Anyhow he could feel no assurance of the great god's return. For primitive man was ignorant of the fact that the sun's course was fixed and certain ; that

as surely as he died, so surely would he return to gladden the earth and provide living creatures with food. The danger of universal death must be averted somehow. To effect this the ancients mourned the death of the sun-god by sacrificing to him their most precious things.

In this season of desolation and supreme grief men mutilated themselves in a terrible manner. Women sacrificed their beauty, by tearing and disfiguring their faces and cutting off their hair. Children were sacrificed and put to death in order to celebrate and mourn the death of Hammon, and to turn away the catastrophe accompanying that death.

By degrees, as men became more civilised, human sacrifices ceased; animals were offered instead. The mutilations continued, but became less violent, less severe. Gradually, as the world grew in knowledge, the conscious worship of the sun-god died out, and the original meaning of these sacrifices and mutilations was lost in antiquity. But their practice still went on in different forms, and the rites were absorbed into the new religions.

By the confraternity of the Aïssaouas in North Africa the character of these pagan cults seems to be preserved in a very complete degree.

The sect nominally is a Mohammedan one. At their worship they call upon the name of Allah, and read portions of the Qu'ran. But though they are not conscious of it themselves, the strange performances connected with their rites, and the weird things that take place during their celebration, belong purely and intimately to a pagan nature-worship. The mutilations are less terrible and less violent, but otherwise perhaps there is no difference between the rites of the disciples of Aïssaoua in the mosques and those of the

priests of Baal, who cried and cut themselves with knives in the sacred groves.

This fact adds immense interest to the strange customs connected with the worship of this curious sect.

The Aïssaoua is not a common or numerous brotherhood, and it is a very close one. The initiation takes place when the candidates desiring admission are quite boys. These rites of initiation, I find, include baptism with holy water, by the priest of the order, who also spits into the mouth of the novice ; this latter action representing the acquisition of *baraka*, and being common in all rites of magic. At the same time words from the Qu'ran are uttered. Concerning the ceremonial of worship, and the extraordinary things which take place at it, the members themselves, at least the ordinary ones, seem to understand little. They possibly will not, more likely cannot, give any explanation of what they do. The fact is, that the whole thing is the expression of a cult that has been forgotten ; it does not belong to this age or this civilisation at all. It is purely a survival.

The little native town of Teboursouk, the ancient Thubursicum of the Romans, perched up amongst the mountains, thirty miles from the railway station of Medjez-el-Bab, is a stronghold of the Aïssaouas.

The road from Medjez-el-Bab, passing through Testour,<sup>1</sup> between two chains of mountains, follows the course of the river Medjerda. From the plain it rises gradually upward, winding in and out of the mountains like a shining band of silver, appearing and disappearing ahead of you. In April its edges are ablaze with flowers of the most gorgeous colouring. Gorse bushes are weighed down with their mass of gold, the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 153.

mauve flowers of the rosemary mix with the pale yellow spikes of the wild mignonette, and thick masses of brilliant orange marigolds make a sumptuous carpet. All the colours are rich; even the poppies are deep crimson, instead of scarlet.

As our little diligence lumbers heavily along, strange figures meet or pass us on the road. A group of Bedouin women, wearing garments of the native blue, this colour taking the place of the red worn in some parts of the country. A rich Arab wearing a blue-grey burnous is riding a handsome mule, furnished with a richly embroidered saddle. Then follow a group of men all in white. Close to the road a native is ploughing with a team of twelve handsome oxen. The Oued Khalled lies below, deep down at the bottom of a gorge, which it has cut for itself in the soft sand, as clearly as though with a knife. Behind, far away in the distance, rises the great Djebel Zaghouan, towering grandly over Tunisia. Presently, climbing up the rocky height ahead, Teboursouk comes into sight. Very white and very picturesque it looks when seen from a distance, very dirty and very squalid it is really; until evening comes with its kindly veil, and softens and hides all the crudities.

It is the Moûlouûd, the day of the Prophet's birthday, and one of the great Mohammedan feasts. The Aïssaouas are holding a splendid service in honour of it.

The object of our pilgrimage to Teboursouk had been to visit the Roman city of Thugga, which could be reached from thence. We had arrived only late the night before, and during the whole of the day there had been a heavy and unceasing downpour of rain; we had managed somehow to get through and survive an inexpressibly disappointing time, determining that even

the desire to see Thugga would not enable us to struggle through such another twelve hours, but that we should have to acknowledge ourselves vanquished and go back again to Tunis. We had already resigned ourselves to a dreary evening in the small French inn, one of those which are kept up chiefly by the officers of the French garrison, and are to be found in quite out-of-the-way places. They are generally clean; mine host, who is often the chef, is always extremely civil and anxious to please, and the cooking is passable. In the inn at Teboursouk the café was the only sitting-room.

Attracted by the sound of a gramophone, we had wandered into it, and found most of the European population of the place, numbering perhaps a dozen, most of them being French officers, assembled there, playing cards or bagatelle or drinking coffee and liqueurs. They were all most orderly and quiet. The proprietor's wife was sitting in a corner of the room sewing, and her little girl, a pretty child of about seven, evidently a great pet amongst them all, was flitting about near her mother and playing with her doll.

So we settled ourselves at one of the small tables with our books, asked for some coffee, and speculated about the company and their lives in this queer place in the mountains. How monotonous must be the existence of the few Europeans! How dependent they must be upon each other for society and sympathy! Life would be unbearable for them if they were not all friendly among themselves; unless, indeed, fights and quarrels might possibly relieve the monotony.

We were feeling rather dismal and more than half regretting the enterprise, when our host came to tell us that there was to be a special ceremony of the

Aïssaouas, and that if we cared to be present, a Frenchman, the postmaster of the place, who was going, would be willing to pilot us there.

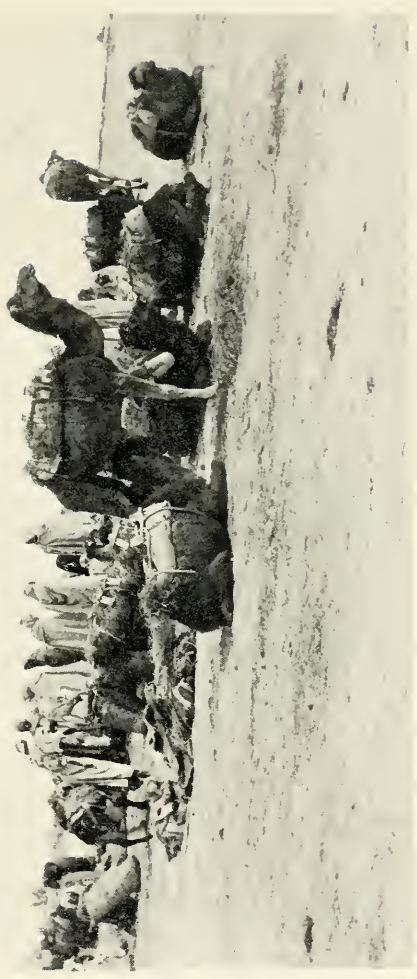
We welcomed any relief from the monotony with joy, and, strangely expectant, sallied forth.

The rain, which to us had proved so irksome, had been much needed and longed for. There is a delicious freshness in the air after the dryness; and the full moon is reflected in numberless little puddles upon the rough ground. The narrow streets are lighted only by the moon. Barbaric music, the tom-tom and the pipe, the alluring sound that always brings memories of the Arab village after sunset, beats upon the darkness. As we climb up the narrow tortuous streets, stumbling over the ragged, uneven stones, now and then a ghostly white figure passes us. You hear the soft flap of the loose slipper heel grow fainter and fainter as its wearer disappears into the black shadow. The broken sound of isolated pipes and tom-toms becomes more insistent and more concentrated. A blaze of light streams out into the street, and we have reached the mosque.

The moment we entered we were impressed with the solemnity of the scene. The room is the annexe or mçalla of the mosque, and is divided from it by a green wooden screen. It is a long, low room. Massive pillars with beautiful capitals, belonging, doubtless, to the old Roman town of Thugga, support the vaulted roof.

The building is flooded with an intense but softened light coming from two great glass chandeliers and numbers of lamps which hang from the ceiling. It is diffused over the white walls and the white pillars, and concentrated upon the upturned faces of about two hundred worshippers, who are seated upon the

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



AFTER THE MARKET, BOU SAADA



floor. Many of the faces are solemn and grand and even noble.

The room is closely packed from wall to wall. Amongst the seated figures stands the priest, whose office is a hereditary one. He is a handsome old man, with a grave face betraying no emotion—if indeed he is capable of feeling any.

The French postmaster and ourselves are the only Europeans present. The natives standing in a crowd inside the door take no notice of us beyond just moving to allow us to come in and take up our positions so that we are able to see the whole of the room. The men sitting on the floor do not even glance towards us as we make our way through and mingle with the standing crowd.

Presently there is a slight movement. The service is about to begin. The men nearest the screen form themselves into two long lines facing each other. A chafing dish containing hashish is lighted and passed up and down the lines, and a monotonous repetition of verses from the Qu'ran begins. Over and over again the low, growling, muttered, rhythmical measure rolls down the room. Now and then the voices are raised in unison, and grow louder. They are answered by a strange cry from behind a grill at the far side of the room. It is a shrill sound, tremulous and piercing. It is the Zagharit, that cry of Libyan origin which Herodotus says was heard also in the temple of Athena.<sup>1</sup> The same cry was uttered by the Grecian women in their incantations to the moon, and

<sup>1</sup> "I think, for my part, that the loud cries uttered in our sacred rites come also from there" (Libya), "for the Libyan women are greatly given to uttering such cries, and utter them very sweetly." (Herodotus, book iv. 189.)

These cries were used solely in honour of Athene; they were not howls or cries of lamentation, but shouts of triumph. (G. Rawlinson's Herodotus, note *in loc.*)

by the Libyan women in their worship of Tanith.<sup>1</sup> It has the mingling sound of gurgling water, the cry of a night bird, and the wind. It might be some unknown spirit cry coming from another world. The timbre of it is so curiously haunting that, once heard, it will never be forgotten.

The men upon the floor rearrange themselves and draw closer together. Now they begin to beat the tom-toms, softly at first, then louder and louder and louder. The excitement grows, until it becomes almost breathless. The men shout, and once more the shrill cry from the hidden women breaks upon the troubled atmosphere. When a measure is finished, the tom-toms are spun round and tossed high up into the air, then seized again, and beaten louder than ever.

Now about thirty of the worshippers, raising themselves again from the floor, place themselves in a long line, with their backs against the wooden screen, and their faces towards the musicians and the crowd upon the floor.

The reeling, maddening music of the tom-toms goes on, while the standing men begin rhythmically to sway their bodies, bowing and bending forward till their foreheads are even with their knees. They move their heads from side to side ; they stamp their feet, always in unison, while intermittently they groan with a sound that is like the growl of some wild beast, or the rattling of stones upon the sea-shore in a storm.

The place seems to be vibrating with some strange, unaccountable emotion, restless and even appalling—as though one held one's breath and waited. Then suddenly, from the crowd standing at one end of the room, a man dashes out into the space upon the floor

<sup>1</sup> John B. Bury, *Journ. of Hellen. Studies*, t. vii., quoted by Dr. Bertholon.

in front of the long line. He has torn his turban from his head and thrown off his haik ; now he is dressed only in loose linen trousers and thin shirt. He dances about wildly, throwing his head backwards and forwards, tossing his long hair over his face and shoulders. Then he kneels upon the ground with up-turned face and wide-open mouth. Two or three men appear to be directing the movements of those seized with the frenzy. One of them drops a stone into the kneeling man's open mouth ; this he swallows with evident enjoyment ; then follow a couple of long nails and some needles.

Presently another man dashes out of the crowd. One of the directors hands to him lighted sticks, tied together to form a torch. He tears off his shirt and holds the blazing fire against his flesh ! The flames lick his chest and neck, and flare up under his armpits. Yet he is not burnt or hurt, or even scorched. And, what seems to be even more incredible still, the shirt, thin though it is, which he holds in the flames, does not catch fire.

And all the time the rhythmical movements of the long row of standing men and their low muttered growls are incessant. The noise of the bendirs<sup>1</sup> and the insidious, bewildering music of the zarna<sup>2</sup> never cease. The emotion is growing in strength ; the excitement becomes painfully intense. One man after another breaks out from the line and flings himself into the middle of the floor, shaking and dancing and crying with frenzy. As each man enters into the frenzied condition some kind of mutilation or species of strange food seems to be to him a necessity—indeed, not only a necessity but a source of positive pleasure. He will follow the director, who may be too busy to attend

<sup>1</sup> Drums.

<sup>2</sup> Pipes.

to him at once, with hungry, beseeching, half-sleepy eyes, go down on his knees even, begging like a dog, until his strange craving is satisfied. When a stone or some broken glass perhaps, or a horrible wriggling scorpion, is dropped into his open mouth, or a sharp knife is run into his flesh, then he is glad. He swallows the one ; crunches up the other, and drives and pushes the steel into his body with evident enjoyment.

At one time the excitement grew to such intensity as to be alarming. The frenzy seemed to be spreading throughout the room. One by one the men from the crowd standing round us near the door broke out. A man who was standing close to us and reassuring me, telling me that there was nothing whatever to fear, suddenly began to shake from head to foot and dashed wildly out to join the seething mass of struggling men in the middle of the floor.

The numbers presently became so great that it was difficult for the director to cope with them. As he was able, he seized each devotee round the waist, and muttered some whispered words close to his ear. Almost immediately the man seemed to be released from his delirium and became once more calm and sane. Each one as he came out of the frenzied state passed into another room, put on his outer garments and turban and reappeared as though nothing had happened.

Up to the last the barbaric music continued with unrelaxed fury. Up to the last the breathless excitement increased. Then suddenly—it appears to reach breaking-point. The tension, which had become almost unbearable, is relaxed. Something seems to snap. There is a moment's lull. Then a suppressed murmur goes round the outer crowd, and all is finished.

A great united cry breaks out from the long line of

standing men, a cry that has in it a sound of triumph, a *Te Deum* after a time of terrible stress, or after a battle.

It is very wonderful and very weird. As one goes out into the moonlight once more, and the ghostly white figures of the worshippers overtake and pass one in the silent street, one is possessed with a sense of having been in the presence of a mystery. The explanation of it may be a perfectly material one, but nothing can take away from the strange solemnity of the scene, enacted in that little village of *Teboursouk* amongst the mountains of North Africa. The weird, troubled cry of the hidden women, the barbaric music, the softly diffused light in the whitened room, the grandeur of the pillars taken from some pagan temple, the faces and the picturesque figures of the seated crowd—the memory of it all will never die; the sense of that strange atmosphere will linger on with those who felt it as an indestructible impression.

The same kind of thing may be witnessed elsewhere in North Africa—in *Kairouan* especially. But here often tourists are present, and though the worship may be sincere enough in itself, the difference between the rites of the *Aïssaouas* as carried out at *Kairouan* and at *Teboursouk* strikes one as the difference between a fashionable London church and the little church amongst the fields, where the simple old country folk go to worship.

At *Biskra* the rites of the *Aïssaouas* have unhappily degenerated into a mere show for visitors. If a certain number of francs is subscribed at one of the hotels, there is no difficulty whatever in arranging a performance, but it is just that—a performance, and nothing more. When the rites are carried out in this prosaic—

one is almost inclined to add vulgar—manner, they are robbed of much of their interest and of all their poetry. At Teboursouk, where there are no tourists, and hardly any Europeans, it is altogether a different thing. It was really a worship, weird, and solemn, and curiously interesting; a strange graft upon Islamism, of which, in common with so many other Mussulman practices, there is no mention at all in the Qu'ran.

In the same manner, and under the same mysterious, perhaps hypnotic, influence, the predecessors of the Aïssaouas—those belonging to the brotherhood of Hammon and Tanith—were able to undergo mutilations which otherwise would have entailed intense suffering. So during these rites of the Aïssaouas the body may be exposed to fire, some sharp instrument driven into the flesh, or some presumably injurious object swallowed, while in some unexplained manner the nerves are thrown into a state of complete insensibility, and there appears to be no after consciousness of pain or visible wound to show that any physical mutilation has taken place.

At our hotel at Kairouan the Arab whose duties combined those of waiter and chambermaid was an Aïssaoua. We found him simple, very much in earnest, and ready to talk. He assured us that he experienced no pain or inconvenience, and that the living scorpions tasted like eggs. A boy who attached himself to us, as boys will in North Africa, told us that he was under instruction, but had not yet been initiated.

Instances of a like insensibility to pain have been known amongst the devotees of other religions. When Perpetua was martyred at Carthage and had been exposed to the horns of a savage cow, streaming with

blood from the wounds which the animal had given her, she was taken back for a few moments to her companions ; and had not the least idea that anything had happened. When were her tortures to begin, she asked, and it was not until she was shown the blood upon her body that she became conscious of the terrible wounds she had already received.

Instances of the same kind of religious delirium have occurred amongst the flagellants of the middle ages, and even in a small degree during modern times—at the time of the recent revivals in Wales. The fact remains, although its cause lies out of sight and the effects have been misinterpreted. It is not peculiar to any one religion, but it exists and has existed in the cults of all countries and of all ages.

## CHAPTER XI

### CAVES AND DENS OF THE EARTH

THE ancients had a vague knowledge about some curious people who made their dwellings in the depths of the earth, some upon the coast of the Red Sea, some in the mountains to the south of Fezzan, others in a region near the Syrtes. Old writers described these people as being great hunters, and so swift that they were able to catch running game. They were said to live upon the flesh of serpents, and lizards, and beetles, and to speak some extraordinary language that was unlike that of human beings. Herodotus compared it to the strident cry of a bat.

All these wonderful stories were discredited, and supposed to belong to fairy tales that so often surround unknown countries. Where so much seemed to be impossible, nothing was believed to be true.

But as a matter of fact the incredulity was misplaced. While further knowledge often proves much that is looked upon as true to be only myth, it equally often shows things regarded as fable to be fact. So it was in the case of the stories of the underground dwellers told by the old writers.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century some of these people were discovered to the south-west of Tripoli. In 1869, when the French made their way through the great mountains to the south-west of Gabes, they came upon the Matmatas. And the Troglodytes of the ancients, robbed, it is true, of the strange





CHEIK'S HOUSE AT MATMATA

attributes with which they had been accredited, became an established fact.

The region of Matmata is an irregular square, bounded upon the north by the territory of Gabes, and upon the south by Medinine, with Tatahouine lying to the east and Kabylia to the west. The road rises from Gabes for some miles by easy ascents, cut here and there by the courses of little streams, marked by lines of verdure and scattered palm-trees. As you climb higher, the country becomes more desolate, and the ground more broken and stony. Now and then a patch of green barley relieves the eye, perhaps a fig-tree or two or three olives, deep down in a hollow which has been worn by the winter torrents. But the general impression is desolation—rocks, and stones, and barrenness.

The road, no longer straight, winds on in and out among the rough spurs of hill; sometimes it is cut out of the sheer rock; sometimes it is covered with sand so deep that it is difficult even for a powerful motor to plough its way through. Still on, round the shoulder of the mountain, with the road that has yet to be traversed, visible upon a higher level. The distant horizon is hidden. At last, at a height of 1200 feet, a vast upland plain, lying within a circle of mountains, is reached, and the great village of Bled Kebira lies before us.

Our journey is not yet ended, but the rest of it must be made on foot. Above, some 500 feet higher, lies the Djebel Matmata, its flanks covered with great, broken rocks and rough shale, amongst which a little wiry grass and a few scrubby bushes just manage to keep alive. A long, tiring climb over abrupt heights and large terraces, brings us to the precipice of sheer rock surrounding the summit of the mountain. All

round are a series of earthworks, holes of three feet deep, sheltered by bastions at the salient angles.

If this has been a climb, now there comes a scramble ; for the precipice is only accessible here and there, where clefts have been formed in the splintered crags, but at last the top is reached, and the scattered ruins of the old Qaçer or fortified village Gelaâ Matmata, where once upon a time the tormented and persecuted Berber tribes sought refuge from their enemies, and by almost superhuman effort preserved their existence.

The natives of Tripoli from time immemorial have been robbers and marauders, and a terror to the more sedentary people of the adjacent country. The people in the country of the Syrtes, south of Gabes, have always suffered from their incursions. As soon as the Matmatas began to flourish, when their flocks were pasturing, and their trees full of fruit, these pillaging hordes swooped down upon them, destroyed all cultivation, and carried off everything that was valuable ; including even, whenever they got the chance, the people themselves.

Tripoli has always been one of the great markets for slaves—Tunis and Tangier were supplied from this source. To escape capture, the unfortunate Matmatas were driven to seek refuge upon the tops of the most inaccessible mountains. There they made barricades upon a narrow plateau, where it was possible for a handful of men, perhaps, to defend themselves against a hundred. There they made a little fortified village. The manner in which they maintained life and supplied themselves with provisions remains a marvel and a mystery. But the Matmata were pure Berbers, of the tribe, it is thought, of Djabaliya,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> M. Peltier.

a fine race, possessed of extraordinary tenacity and power of resistance. The name of Kahena, the Berber Joan of Arc, is associated with them. The Matmatas themselves claim to have been brought to this inaccessible and mountainous region by the wonderful woman who led the Berbers against the Mohammedan invasion. One is almost inclined to suppose that the Matmata settlement must belong to an earlier date; but there is no reason to doubt the story of Kahena's presence amongst the Matmata mountains, or the probability of her having helped the Berbers of that part of the country to resist the Arabs. For she was not far off when she entrenched herself at El Djem against the forces of Sidi Okba. The story, at any rate, is invested with a romance that fitly surrounds the interesting people who live in this wonderful part of the country.

It is, indeed, possible to believe any romantic story told of the Matmatas as one stands upon the summit of the great peak, amid the ruins of their fortified village. Amongst the broken stones and huge blocks of rock, numberless little plants of sweet-scented herbs have taken root—wild thyme, with its sweet purple blossoms, marjoram, and “old man.” Their homely presence redeems the scene from the sense of utter desolation.

All around lie the Djebel Matmata, wild and savage and silent. Here and there a great rocky height, like the one we are standing upon, rises up in isolated grandeur. Far away, is the blue line of the sea, with the country lying between the Gelaâ Matmata and the coast, spread out like the raised model of a map. To the south lie the valley, a great plain surrounded by mountains, and the populous village of Bled Kebira. The effect of the village from the top of the mountain

is most curious. There is no sign of dwelling, but the ground has the appearance of being riddled with gravel-pits or gigantic rabbit-holes.

Here it was that the Matmata people entrenched themselves, when at last, tired of an impossible kind of existence upon the mountain-top, they decided to seek the protection of their enemies, the nomad tribes. The robbers accepted the suzerainty. So little by little the persecuted people came down from their eeries and dug themselves dwellings in the thick deposit which the rains had accumulated in the valley. For defence was still necessary ; their industry, and the way in which they cultivated the land and raised large flocks of sheep and goats, made them the constant prey of marauding hordes. It was not until the French came that they were able at last to dwell in any degree of peace.

That they have a desire for a settled abode, and the love of peace, is shown not only by the extraordinary tenacity with which they clung to the soil, but by the evident pride that they have in their queer underground dwellings, now that they have them. They are of the same form as the classic Arab house, with its interior court surrounded by buildings. The fact that the house happens to be under the earth, instead of upon its surface, is a mere matter of detail, the result of circumstances ; but it is a fact that lends a quaint unusualness, difficult to describe, to the village of Bled Kebira.

The dwelling of the Cheikh of the village, to whom we had an introduction, was a specimen of all the rest, except that it was larger and more decorated ; the description of this one is no doubt the description of them all.

An entrance in the ground leads into a tunnel-

shaped entrance hall, the roof of which is plastered, and divided by sculptured cords into lozenge-shaped divisions. Bas-reliefs of hands and feet are formed in the plaster, which are decorative in a curious fashion, and are survivals doubtless of an early religious cult.

Through this hall the courtyard, which is surrounded by the house, is entered. The scene upon which we came was quite patriarchal. Three families, having between them fifteen children, live in this dwelling. In the centre of the courtyard are collected the flocks of the inhabitants, the black goats and kids, which had been brought home for the night. In one corner of the courtyard, shyly awaiting the visit of the strangers, all the children are grouped. There are some beautiful little girls among them, with fair olive skins, oval faces, and great soft, velvety eyes, and the irresistible grace of movement of the young wild animal. The Cheikh's little daughter of about seven years old is especially delightful. She is full of simple, unconscious dignity and charm. The women of the respective families have hidden themselves in one of the rooms; they are not visible to the male stranger, but are quite ready to be friendly, with a pretty frightened grace, to a visitor of their own sex. Catching up their babies in their arms, they all crowded round and examined my clothes and trinkets with the greatest interest.

The rooms of these strange underground dwellings are all vaulted and tunnel-shaped. It is the form of the ancient boat-shaped *mapalia* in use among the natives which Sallust speaks of in his account of the war with Jugurtha. The same shape is still seen in the tents, either covered with camel's-hair cloth or roofed over with palm-leaves or dried grass, of the Bedouins. The *ksours*, the strange dwellings of Medi-

nine and Metameurs, of which I shall speak presently, preserve the same form.

The centre of a Matmatan room is occupied by a large rough loom, upon which the women, and even the children, work. All round the wall, in holes cut in the rock, into which they fit, stand great jars of pottery, recalling the Roman amphora, of different shapes and sizes. Sometimes they are made of halfa grass. They hold the oil or grain, which is lowered into the room through a hole in the roof. A large picturesque bedstead stands at one end of the room; the posts stuck into the ground, at the head and sides of the bed, are fashioned into a sort of arcade design, by being covered with cement, which is then faced with white plaster. The wall at the end of the room, facing the door, is adorned with all manner of curious ornaments—curious only because they are so familiar. One looks for some sign of native workmanship, for anything really interesting amongst these treasures. But one looks in vain; these articles are treasured because they are foreign, and therefore, to the Matmata people, of course rare and valuable.

The wall of this queer vaulted room, dug out of the ground, and more than 250 miles from a railway station, is decorated with all manner of trivial European odds and ends—about a dozen little penny looking-glasses of obviously German manufacture; a few china plates of a common French pattern; some of the ordinary yellow pottery, which abounds in North Africa, and has nothing distinctive about it. There is even an empty Colman's mustard tin and a sardine box amongst the collection. They have been cast out perhaps from the French fort upon the height near by.

All these queer things are prized and arranged with

real artistic feeling. This sense is so often shown in the cottages of an English village—the reaching after beauty, the genuine taste, the hoarding of simple things. But nowhere could more real artistic feeling be displayed, or a more absolute pride and love of the home, that characteristic which is looked upon as one of the signs of civilisation, than amongst the Matmatas living in the bowels of the earth, in the village of Bled Kebira.

A glimpse of the life of these interesting people makes one long to dig deep in search of those valuable and precious survivals of undying primitive beliefs which must surely exist. Islamism, it is true, is amongst them; it has been driven through the mountains at the point of the sword. The present sign of its existence is a white mosque of entirely mushroom growth. It was put up by the French, and not by the Matmatas themselves, and looks utterly out of place. Until quite lately it was the only building above the ground at Bled Kebira. The desolate country lying round it may well raise a wonder where the worshippers are to come from; and when the white-robed figures emerge from the earth at the hour of prayer, as some one has said, the scene might suggest a picture of the Day of Judgment. It has also been remarked with truth, that at Bled Kebira it is the living who occupy the real sepulchres, while the dead are nearer the surface. For, like the Arabs, the Matmatas bury their dead in no depth of soil.

A few little upright tombstones with familiar symbols upon them have already grown up round the mosque, while near to the graves of those to whom time no longer means anything, a sun-dial of primitive design stands silently marking the hours. Upon a

pillar of stones is laid a flat slab, upon this rests a wedge-shaped stone, round which are carved rude numbers. It is one of the most primitive, but only one of the many, forms of sun-dials to be found in North Africa.

Towards the south-east of Matmata and nearer to the coast lies that part of Tunisia called by the Arabs the Great Province, a remote and desolate country, full of vast naked spaces of mournful colouring. The Roman writers, Pliny and Sallust, say that these regions were once covered with trees. This statement may be an exaggerated one ; however, Captain Lebouf, who has studied this part of the country and made interesting research, says that probably owing to the wonderful work of the Romans, and perhaps that of the Berbers themselves, under the influence of the Romans, the Great Province was certainly at one time far more fertile and prosperous than it is to-day.

The Romans never occupied the extreme south of Tunisia, but subdued the inhabitants and established military settlements amongst them. When they first came to this region they found a warlike and wandering tribe, with nevertheless the capabilities of a settled people. To these people they gave protection and the moral force of association.

The Berbers were adaptable and imitative. Under the intellectual influence of the Romans, although the conquerors were only present in very small numbers, they soon learned how to cultivate the land. They learned also how to save the water, and how to make the barren soil fertile.

But this did not last. The Romans left, and the peaceful industrious Berbers once more fell a prey to marauding tribes. First came the Vandals, who,

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instead of being civilising conquerors as were the Romans, and as are the French at the present time, only came to pillage and destroy. It was the same with the Arabs later on; and besides, there were always the robbers of the Tripoli coast to be feared and to fight against. And gradually, as in the case of the Matmatas, the people of the Great Province found it necessary to associate themselves with the marauding tribes and to pay them tribute.

The struggle for life was unceasing. Tribal wars and the inroads of robbers were incessant. Defence, and that a strenuous one, has always been found necessary. Only since the coming of the French have Medinine and Metameur been at peace and safe from the incursions of their enemies. So here again we find that an ingenious means of defence has been resorted to.

Medinine and Metameur are fortified villages, different indeed from the Matmata ones, but equally quaint and equally interesting.

It is difficult for us who live in peace and security to realise a state of things which makes a desperate struggle for actual existence necessary—to feel at night that the dwelling must be absolutely proof against attack, otherwise there might be small chance of the inmates being alive in the morning. The ingenuity of the primitive was often severely taxed to invent means for the preservation of his existence. The curious villages of Medinine and Metameur, as well as those of the Matmata, are survivals of his devices.

The only point of resemblance between the fortified village of Bled Kebira and the villages of Metameur and Medinine, lying close to the Tripoli border, is the shape of the houses, or *rhorfa*, as they are called. It

is difficult to describe the weird effect produced as one enters the two latter villages. When the first glimpse is caught of their strange dwellings, one is inclined to shake oneself, and wonder whether one is really awake.

For, in common with so many in North Africa, this scene might well belong to some strange dream. Each house of the village consists of a barrelled vault about eight feet wide, eight feet high, and about twenty feet long inside. The dividing walls of a row of houses are carried up, and another row of similar vaults built upon the top, then another, and another, and another; until sometimes the building rises to the height of five houses. There are no windows. The house is entered by a heavy door, not more than two feet in width and three feet six inches in height. This door is fastened upon the inside by a great wooden bar; so the inmates are as snug and safe as rabbits in a hole.

When they come out of the house their mode of securing the safety of their abode is a most curious one. The door is pulled to from outside. To the right of the door, and at a distance of two or three feet from it, is a hole in the wall; through this the arm is pushed, the key being held in the hand. This key is a long piece of wood, fitted with pegs which correspond with holes on the end of the bolt. The pegs drop into the holes, and thus the bolt is pulled forward or pushed back to fasten or open the door. This is the "Key of David," which, in the terse words of the Old Testament, it is said Isaiah the prophet saw resting upon the shoulder of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, that "he might open, and none shall shut, and shut and none shall open."

When all is made safe, the owner of the house

climbs down the face of the wall simply by means of a projecting stone stuck in here and there. Occasionally, but not very often, rude steps are made in the cement of the wall. In any case, the descent of an inhabitant of a *rhorfa* from his door to the ground is a real acrobatic feat—a more difficult one than can be guessed even by an active Englishman until he has actually tried to perform it himself. The owner having descended, the quaint key is borne away over his shoulder. He starts off for a tramp, perhaps, across the desert, secure in the knowledge that his goods are safe, for he has shut and “none can open.”

The villages of Medinine and Metameur lie within a short distance of each other; they differ merely in respect of size and population. Medinine is a large village, consisting of about two thousand *rhorfa*, closely packed together in rows and squares. Close by are the French barracks, in which is quartered the large garrison necessary to protect this district from invasion from the Tripoli frontier. Now at last the people of these lonely and remote villages are safe from the terrors of robbery and murder—free to tend and raise their flocks, reap and sow, and plant their palms and figs and olives.

Towards all these industries the French are giving a great impulse, not only lending encouragement, but also practical help. The Direction d'Agriculture gives to the people, both of Medinine and Metameur, and also to those of the Matmata villages, good specimens of fruit trees. To this gift they add lessons as to their culture, and offer prizes for the best results. Thus they are doing exactly the same work that the Romans did in the same region before them.

As one walks about in the strange villages of

Metameur or Medinine the unfamiliar atmosphere of a dream still seems to cling to one. It is difficult to dispel it. Especially one feels this as, bent almost double, one creeps into the little fortress in the centre of Metameur. Although, as I have said, thanks to the French, the meaning of, and necessity for, the fortress are things of the past, it still remains, and the quaint houses of which it is formed are still inhabited. As none of the houses have windows, the outside of the square is a blank wall of rough stone. This was the Qacer of Metameur, and it was absolutely impregnable.

Necessity is the mother of invention. No better illustration of the trite old proverb could be found than the fortress at Metameur. Dire, indeed, must have been the necessity which produced such ingenuity of defence. When the inhabitants of the village were forced to seek refuge in their marvellous little stronghold, they were in fear of their lives, and suffering from a very furnace of storm and stress. When they had crawled, almost upon all fours, through that low tunnel-shaped entrance, they found themselves in a small square of about sixty feet each way. In the centre stands a little booth made of palm branches that forms the common kitchen of the inhabitants. Upon all four sides, piled up above one another to the height of five or six storeys, rise the strange barrel-shaped dwellings. The projecting stones by which alone the upper ones can be reached are more rare, and farther apart than ever. A native boy who had attached himself to us in a friendly manner, as our guide, scrambled up to the top like a monkey, and explained that women were not expected to climb above the fourth storey.<sup>1</sup>

The higher portions of the buildings are now only used as store-houses.

How often  
do you see a  
man in a  
suit and tie  
who is  
not a  
man in a  
suit and tie?

QACER AT METAMEUR



In these queer villages of Metameur and Medinine one is very near to the beginning of things. Here may be seen many instances of the simple and early forms from which the later and complicated machines and methods of civilisation have been evolved and developed. The first tier of houses in many cases is used for workshops. In these barrel-shaped, cave-like rooms all kinds of workmen are engaged.

A boy blacksmith, squatting upon the floor, is forging a nail or spike with the most elementary pair of bellows, made simply of two rough hairy skins joined together by a couple of sticks, and forming an oval-shaped mouth. He blows a fire that is burning upon stones, on the floor. In another of these cave-like rooms, almost in the dark, a man is working upon a loom made of rough poles fastened together. All round the walls hang great hanks of white wool ready for weaving and dyeing—let us hope with vegetable dyes of home manufacture. The use of these is becoming very rare. The aniline dyes of foreign commerce have found their way even into the remote villages of North Africa. They are much cheaper and less precarious, and the natives have taken to them in the most regrettable manner. The French, however, having realised the pity and the mistake of the practice, have established, in Tunis and elsewhere, schools of weaving, where only vegetable dyes are used—the gorgeous yellow made from cedar roots, the red of the pomegranate, and many others. The production of these colours is an expensive process, and an uncertain one, and cannot therefore be used generally, but, at any rate, the art of making them will not be lost.

In the remote regions of North Africa, such as Metameur and Medinine, one realises the beauty of

elementary handicraft. The women and girls walk about with distaffs and little weaving machines made by themselves in rough wood, or by tying together a few sticks. Here, if you will, you may watch the growth and manufacture of some beautiful thing, from the time that the animal whose skin is to be used is alive, and running about the village, to the final touch. A good deal of leather-work is done in Medinine. In many of the little cave-shaped shops men are sitting upon the floor, making shoes, or purses, or bags of goatskin, and embroidering them with bright-coloured silks and narrow strands of white kid. A little farther on the skins are being prepared. Heaps of them are lying about on the ground, some with the hair taken off, some with it still left on.

In the little square in the middle of the village, amongst the heads and skins of those who have already been sacrificed, lie the poor live doomed animals, whose turn is to come next. One by one they are carried away upon the shoulders of a man, in the Oriental fashion made so familiar to us by pictures of the Good Shepherd. A few minutes later, back comes the skin of the little victim. It is a horrible and a barbarous sight, and one which we could very well dispense with. Interesting, but not a much more pleasant sight, was the surgical operation which I saw being carried on outside a house in one of the squares of weird, tunnel-shaped houses at Medinine. Sitting upon the ground was a little group of people. In the middle of it a handsome young woman was being bled by a native doctor. When the operation was finished, he bound up the arm of his patient with a piece of blue stuff, gathered together his collection of little pans, some of them being of that shape familiar to us in the sign of the barber's shop,

and his lancet, which was an ordinary native knife, and prepared to depart. The young woman got up and walked into the house with a smile upon her face, and sat down just inside her door to talk the matter over with her feminine friends. Her husband came up, and, after a few words with the doctor, presented him with the fee of twopence, which he had extracted from the hood of his burnous. The blood in the basin was then carefully buried by the husband in the sandy soil of the square. And the doctor departed, doubtless to operate upon another patient elsewhere in the village.

Bleeding and burning are the favourite remedies of the native North African doctor. The latter especially is an unfailing panacea for the ills of both men and beasts. "Here is the doctor who tends. The cure comes from God." The cry of the Berber operator is, judging from the painful sights that meet the eye, a very constant one. Surgical operations seem to be as frequent in North Africa as at the present time they have become in Europe, judging by the continual sight that is seen of some wretched horse or camel whose flesh has been deeply seared by the recent application of the hot iron, and the children whose heads or faces are burnt in the same way.

Cauterisations are often made by the blacksmith, who is regarded as a magician,<sup>1</sup> and this for the

<sup>1</sup> The farriers of the Arabs inhabiting the oases of the Great Sahara Desert are exempt from taxes and enjoy numerous privileges. Of these, the most important and striking, as showing the honour accorded to the men of this craft, is the following: When in the battlefield a mounted farrier is hard pressed by enemies, he runs the risk of being killed so long as he remains on his horse with weapons in his hand. But if he alights, kneels down, and with the corners of his hooded cloak or burnous imitates the movements of a pair of bellows, thus revealing his profession, his life is spared. (E. Daumas, *The Horses of the Sahara*.)

reason that the metal in which he works is regarded with awe and reverence. In primitive times the origin of metal-working was imputed to divine beings, who were thought also to be the source of the skill acquired by men. Hence all metal-workers were raised above the level of ordinary mortals. The blacksmith is a worker in iron, and the belief in the magical properties of iron<sup>1</sup> dates from the very earliest times, when iron was still a novelty, and as such was viewed by many with suspicion and distrust.<sup>2</sup> The use of it was frequently forbidden because it was thought to be obnoxious to the spirits, and for this reason it was expected to bring ill-luck. Iron tools of any description whatsoever were prohibited in the making of an altar. "For if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."<sup>3</sup> Over and over again in the Old Testament, this prohibition is repeated. When the Temple was built, all the stones were prepared elsewhere, so that upon the spot there was "neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building."

The famous and sacred wooden bridge, the only one at that time in Rome, the Pons Sublicius, near the Aventine, was made and kept in repair without the use of iron or bronze. This was the bridge that Horatius Cocles, one of the famous three, held against Lars Porsena, the Etruscan. The absence of metal in the

<sup>1</sup> Iron was discovered later than copper or tin. This fact is stated by Hesiod, who is supposed to have written about 900 B.C., during the transition between the bronze and iron ages, and is the oldest European writer known to us. There is evidence in papyrus to show that iron was known and appreciated in Egypt 1600 B.C. (F. Wallis Budge.)

<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian historian, Manetho, who wrote about 275 B.C., and who has been translated by M. Laisnel de la Salle, says that iron was called in Egypt the Bone of Typhon or Devil's Bone; Typhon in Egyptian mythology being the personification of evil.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus xx. 25.



CAMELS CARRYING HALFA



AN ARAB BIR



structure brought luck to its defenders later on, though not perhaps in the way that they expected, for because of it, the Romans were enabled to cut it down and so save the city.

To the superstitious awe of iron, however, there has always been another side. As the metal is obnoxious to the Djinn, inspiring them with fear, so it furnishes man with a weapon which may be turned against these beings when occasion offers.<sup>1</sup> To defend themselves from the Djinn, the Arabs often cry "Iron, Iron," "Hadeed—Hadreed," or Iron, the unlucky. And the fact that cauterisations are performed with this metal is doubtless the cause as well as the effect of much of the universal belief in them for every ailment.<sup>2</sup> The Marabout of the Mosque of the Sabres at Kairouan, mentioned elsewhere, was a blacksmith.<sup>3</sup> And the fact of his having made the gigantic iron swords, of which the scabbards are preserved in the mosque, is probably both the cause and effect of the veneration accorded to him.

. . . . .

In this land of no railways and no machinery, one can hardly over-estimate the importance of his animal to the native. It carries him, it draws water, it

<sup>1</sup> A curious belief has been found by Mr. W. L. Hildburgh to exist in the towns near the French frontier in the district lying along the coast of Flanders and to the east of Ostend. The non-Catholics think that to meet a black-clad Catholic priest is an omen of ill luck, to avert which they at once "touch iron," such as, perhaps, a bunch of keys in the pocket. (*Folk Lore*, 1908.)

<sup>2</sup> In the Qu'ran it is said: "We," God, "sent down *iron*, in which are both keen violence and advantages to men."

<sup>3</sup> In the middle ages blacksmiths were considered superior to all other artisans owing to their faculty of seemingly toying with fire, rendering the dangerous element subservient to their will, and by its aid manipulating iron with ease and dexterity. (R. M. Laurence, M.D.)

ploughs, it works the mill, it feeds and clothes him. And every description of animal is pressed into every kind of service. By this I mean the camel, the cow, the horse, the mule, and the donkey. These are all yoked indiscriminately together for every kind of work. The use of the camel in the plough, it is true, is not common, though that gaunt animal is even employed occasionally in this way. Sometimes, indeed, when perhaps no four-legged animal is forthcoming for the work, women may be seen drawing water from the primitive wells or *birs*, of which there are so many round Medinine.

The water is brought up from a great depth, in skin bags, which ascend and descend upon a rope that is worked over a couple of wheels. When the bag reaches the top, the water pours into a reservoir, through a great spout made of leather. When five or six handsome, bare-legged native women, clad in clinging dark blue garments, with quantities of silver jewellery upon their arms and necks and ankles, are drawing water from one of these primitive wells, the scene is a most picturesque one. Their bodies sway with supple panther-like movements. They smile at you as you pass; their teeth are white and even, and their dark eyes are bright, yet soft. The picture impresses itself upon the memory, and is not easily forgotten.

The country upon either side of the road lying between Medinine and Gabes is stony and barren. Here and there are patches of green, or a little oasis of palm. Sometimes the natives have enclosed a small garden of fig-trees; but generally the land has a desert character. Now and then its barrenness is redeemed by the broom and gorse bushes—great heaped-up masses of gold, which make a blaze of colour. Their

faint almondy scent is borne down upon the morning air.

Other flowers there are in the stony wilderness, but they are only to be seen by those who pause by the way and search for them; and this not because they are hidden, for they lie sheltered from the scorching rays of the sun by no wealth of green leaves, but only because they are so small. Multitudes there are of these tiny plants which have struggled up through the unkindly ground, infinite in variety of exquisite tint and form. Scarcely one raises its head above the level of the stones; existence itself would seem to be only just possible. And yet every blossom is a thing of beauty to marvel at.

In loveliness and brilliancy of colouring they can hold their own with any flower which has grown up in more favourable circumstances; in scent, in proportion to their size, with some of them, none can compare.

I have found a little blossom growing in these stony wastes of a most beautiful blue, shading to red at the centre, in size not larger than a pimpernel; yet the scent of it might be mistaken for that of a Gloire de Dijon rose. The scents of the two flowers are in quality and strength identical.

All animate objects seem to assume enormous importance upon this desert road. Now, you meet a caravan of about one hundred camels, and perhaps thirty donkeys, all bearing picturesque burdens—great bundles of halfa grass, which hang down over their sides. They have been out all night upon the mountains. Their owners were gathering the grass until the sunset. Now, in the early morning, they are carrying it to Gabes to be shipped to England and France, for the manufacture of paper.

Farther on, a couple of cows are treading corn. The straw is spread out in a circle upon the ground, the animals being driven round and round upon it.

At a short distance from the road is a sacred tree, hung all over with rags. Instances of these strange survivals occur all over North Africa, though they are more numerous in some regions than in others. Round about Medinine there are many. The sacred tree is not always of the same species or the same growth. Near Hammam Meskoutine a grand old olive-tree, said to be a thousand years old, is venerated. In the country lying between Gabes and Medinine, where few large trees grow, the sacred ones are low, thick, scrubby bushes, and their branches are covered thickly with rags, many of them having been placed there by women desiring children.

An interesting specimen of this kind of marabout exists also at Hammam R'hira, high up in the mountains sixty miles from Algiers. The tree, which is hung with votive rags, forms a natural arbour where the natives pray and burn incense in the usual earthenware vessels. Here the Holy Well is also present, for a stream of water flowing out of the rock forms a little pool close to the tree.<sup>1</sup>

I have been told that a marabout was buried there, but for this fact I cannot vouch.

<sup>1</sup> A well was generally beside the sacred tree. The goddess of the tree was also the goddess of the well. At the conversion her wells were taken over by the new religion and became holy wells under the protection of the Virgin or of some other saint. They continued to be approached with the same rites as of old, for the ancient boons for which the fertilisation spirit had always been invoked. Besides the public cult for the fertilisation spirit for the welfare of crops and herds, there was also a private cult, aiming at more personal objects. This survives in Christianity in the custom of throwing pins and other things into wells, and wishing. (Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 166.)





ON THE ROAD TO EL HAMEL



AT HAMMAM R'IRHA  
MARABOUTS

Upon the road between Bou Saada and El Hamel, the little village built round the important zaouia and mosque which dominate it, there is another interesting and singularly perfect specimen of tree marabout. The sacred bush, which is almost covered with votive rags, is surrounded by a circle of stones. Two specially large ones are placed in the direction of Mecca. At the foot of these a hole has been made in the ground by the natives scratching up the sand wherewith to perform their ablutions, sand being permitted as a substitute for water, where the latter is not attainable. Before entering the circle the worshippers walk round, and remove their shoes.

This spot is said to be hallowed because it was here that the much-revered marabout of El Hamel used to rest when he journeyed to Bou Saada. But the sacred character with which the place is invested has its origin in a cult much older than Islamism, and here may be traced the accumulation of old cults upon one spot which has been already alluded to elsewhere (*cf.* p. 127).

I must mention yet another curious instance of a sacred spot or marabout. On a shelf in the rock at the side of the wonderful road cut by the French through mountains of the Hodna are piled up large numbers of small green pottery candlesticks, and long tapers of about the thickness of an ordinary lead pencil. Doubtless other instances of these candlesticks and tapers being used as votive offerings upon a sacred spot exist in North Africa, but they are not common. Exactly opposite, upon another portion of the rock through which the road has been cut, are heaped up more candlesticks and more tapers. The spot was doubtless venerated before

the road was cut, but of this I was unable to obtain proof.

There is something wonderfully touching in the faith of the natives in these wayside marabouts, belonging in reality to an ancient pagan cult among the Libyans. For although the worship has been in a way received into Islamism, it has no sanction from or real connection with this newer religion. The primitives believed that the spirit incorporated in the tree had either a harmful or a beneficial potency—that it could give or absorb ills. And this custom of hanging a portion taken from their own garments upon a certain tree, which for some reason has come to be accounted sacred, is probably a rite of sympathetic magic for the expulsion of evil from themselves. By leaving the rag upon a sacred tree, the primitive thought that with it he was depositing the ill that troubled him, and that it would be absorbed by the tree.

The object of sympathetic magic, whether the spirit was supposed to dwell in the tree, or was merely symbolised by it, was to secure the beneficent influence for the suppliant by bringing him into contact with its physical embodiment or home.

And so as he tramps along the hot, weary road, or climbs the hills, the native of North Africa steps aside to hang a rag upon a sacred tree ; or perhaps he makes a special pilgrimage for the purpose. He would be unable to give any reason for doing it except that the tree is holy, and that he trusts and hopes that good will come to him by the action.

Away to the left of the long Medinine road is another sacred spot. Upon the high ground the glistening domes of twelve marabouts are outlined against the blue sky. The white tombstones of these honoured dead form a strong contrast to a grave

a little farther on, close to the roadside. There, evidently quite recently, has been buried one who has fallen by the way. At the head a stick has been planted in the piled-up heap of rough sandy earth; and upon the stick hangs a worn red turban, the head-covering that the Mohammedan sets such curious store by, and treats with so much reverence.

Other weary pilgrims have fallen down and died by the way the night before. Their bodies lie unburied by the roadside. A little donkey that has trudged wearily along under its heavy burden, until it could stagger on no longer; and not far off a white dog, which was perhaps kicked by some animal. His master went home at sunset with the flock, leaving him behind. His bark no longer protects the tent or the queer cave-like house. But his place will quickly be filled, for the native dwelling must have its dog. It is invariably of the same breed, apparently half jackal, and half wild, though very faithful, and when assured that no harm is intended either to his master or his belongings, quite ready to make friends. Until then he looks upon every one who approaches the home as an enemy, and barks loudly to announce the stranger's proximity.

Now upon the road behind us is heard the sound of padding, trampling feet. Suddenly eight of the beautiful Mechaes, the racing camels of the desert, are alongside of the motor, and keep up with it for some distance. It is a magnificent sight. The great white animals, with outstretched necks; the riders, all in white, standing upright in their stirrups, with waving arms and brandished sticks and cries and shouts, urging the camels forward. They can run easily at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour. But

they are on their way to Sousse to take part in a Fantasia. Their riders do not wish to tire them, so, after an exciting rush forward for about two miles, they slacken speed, and are left behind in the distance.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOME SURVIVALS

THE whole population seemed to be gathering in the small market-place of the sun-baked village. Our visit, unpremeditated and suddenly arranged, had evidently been timed at a most interesting moment.

Filiash is one of the quaint little villages of the Ziban. In one corner of its small square market-place stands the mosque, dim and solemn; its low pillars are palm-trees on bases of earth; the steps up to the mimbar are also made of earth. The little crooked tower, which looks as though a breath of wind would blow it over, like a tower made of cards, is of earth also. The square itself is enclosed upon all sides by houses; some of them are broken and fallen, many are mere heaps of dry dust; for the people of North Africa never repair or build anything up again.

Just beyond the square, and adjoining the mosque, is the place for the ablutions of the worshippers, a queer little building, low and damp and dirty. The water does not drain away properly; the floor is slippery and slimy. But here there is curious evidence of the Roman occupation of the Ziban,—stones and pillars which were never cut by the natives, or intended originally for the purposes to which they are put. A huge, finely cut stone forms the step at the doorway. Down one side of the cave-like room are little square recesses, so low that you would have to stoop almost double either to enter or stand inside them. In each of these a small, round, massive stone basin is fixed

in the ground. The cabins are intended for those worshippers who desire to perform the ceremony of total immersion of the body, or ablutions called Ghushl. A garment can be hung over the palm-stick fixed across the entrance; privacy thus being ensured. In the building also there is a large trough for washing, and two smaller ones, all of them evidently Roman coffins. Half hidden in the gloom of the queer little building is a great well about ninety feet deep. Far down, if you lean over its rough hewn sides, you can see the water glistening like a huge black diamond in the darkness. There is plenty of water even in this hot little village upon the edge of the Sahara for those who dig deep enough. It is brought to the surface from the well in a great skin bag at the end of an enormous length of rope. But, judging by the extremely green and unpleasant appearance of the water in the trough, the trouble of raising it weighs heavily in the scale against the idea of any necessity for fresh water amongst the worshippers.

. . . . .

Now the distant sound of music reminds one of the excitement outside in the market-place.

Three men are creating a deafening noise with a huge shallow-shaped drum, a pipe, and the native tambourine. Summoned by the sound, all the people troop out of their houses into the square, and the musicians sit down upon the ground with their backs against a wall, and continue to make more noise than ever. Groups of little girls gaily dressed, with large hoop earrings, and chains round their necks, come into the square and arrange themselves in rows upon the ground. Behind them are the married women, all veiled, and mostly in white. A few wear coloured garments, and the face of one pretty wife, who looks

little more than a child, is clearly visible through a veil of green net, spangled with silver.

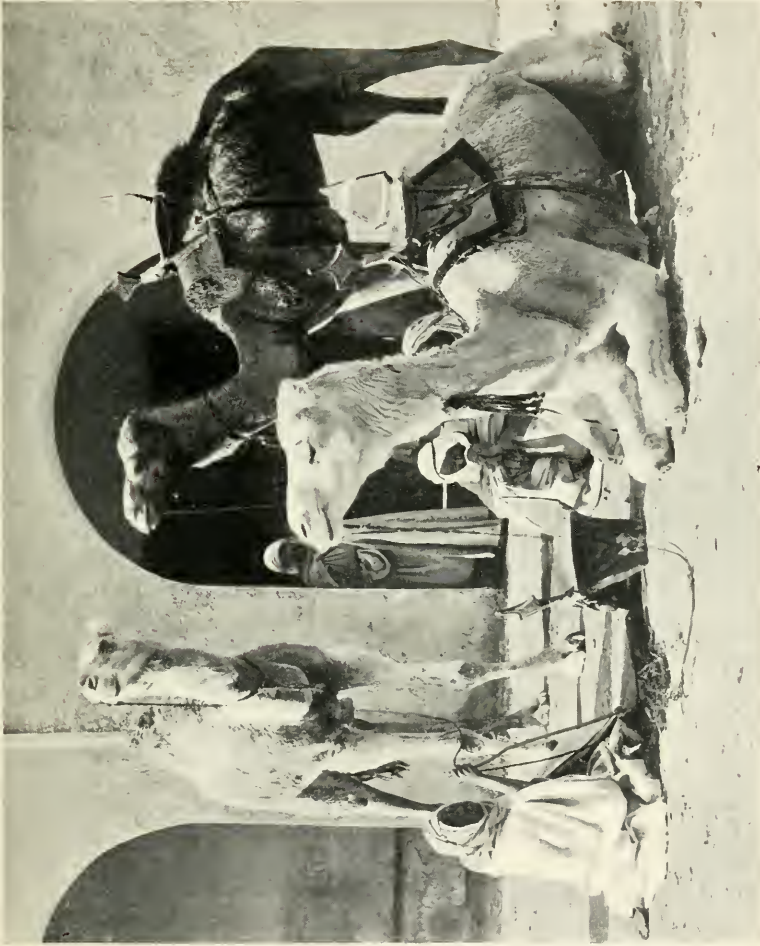
The women take up their position upon one side of the musicians ; the men upon the other ; the small boys play about on either side. Two or three little fellows run out into the middle of the square and let off some squibs and crackers with obvious pride and delight ; boy nature being much the same, whether it is in a mud village in North Africa or in a big town in England.

And now the square is full of people. Every inhabitant of the village who is able to walk must surely be there. They sit in rows on the ground, or form groups all over the earthen walls of the broken-down houses. The sandy market-place is a concentrated mass of bright colour. The ridiculous little crooked minaret of the mosque, with a quaint solemnity that seems to be in keeping with it all, looks down upon the scene.

Judging from the expression upon the faces of the two grand-looking old men, who carry long-barrelled guns in their hands, the serious part of the performance is about to begin. They sit down upon the ground, a look of intense purpose animating their faces, and load the weapons with gunpowder. This part of the proceeding being accomplished, one of them marches solemnly out into the middle of the square and puts his finger upon the trigger. The first barrel goes off, and an expression of enormous pride and satisfaction spreads over the solemn countenance of the old man. But the other barrel of the antiquated gun misses fire, and he returns to his place with a disgusted, disappointed, and baffled look that is worthy of the failure of a Napoleon.

Now it is the turn of the second veteran with his gun ;

he too marches out into the centre of the square. His air of pride and superiority is even greater than that of the first man, and also proclaims the tremendous importance of the act. He is more fortunate than his companion. Both barrels go off. Bang—bang—and the old man returns to his place with a self-conscious walk, that is almost a strut, as pleased with himself as a schoolboy who has triumphed over his companions. There is an air of comic tragedy in the whole performance. But to the actors in it this curious little scene bears a serious meaning. For, as I have said before, the firing-off of guns or burning of powder is thought to scare away the djinn. And now another figure has taken the place of the old men. A dancing-girl comes out into the middle of the square. She has an unpleasant bony and heavy face, of a low type. Her neck is adorned with the most beautiful barbaric chain composed of gold, rough pearls, coral, to which substance a peculiar importance is attached, with numerous amulets hanging upon it at intervals. Here was the omnipresent "Hand of Fâtimah" and others. The lobes of the dancer's ears are dragged down about an inch by huge hoop earrings. Her dress, a red and yellow satin skirt, is very draggled and tawdry; and a shabby veil of spangled black net covers her head and shoulders. Her figure is flat, angular, and large. The movements and the shape of the limbs give one more than a suspicion that the dancer is a youth masquerading as a girl. Glancing round at the assembled people with an ugly leer, she begins those peculiar and singularly ungraceful movements which in North Africa constitute what is called dancing; the wriggling of all the muscles, particularly those of the lower part of the body, the bending backwards accompanied by a few simple steps. The women



MECHARES



amongst the audience utter that curious, shrill cry, the zagharit, the weird sound that broke upon our ears at Teboursouk.<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants of the little brown village of Filiash are gathered together to celebrate a religious ceremony. All that we have been witnessing is the preliminary to a rite which is not mentioned or commanded in the Qu'ran. It has been incorporated into Islamism (and has maintained an importance that is little in keeping with its non-Qu'ranic origin), as also it was into Judaism.<sup>2</sup> But it belongs to a cult and a worship very much older than either the one or the other. Its roots are in paganism, deep down in the most primitive needs and fears and beliefs of the ancients. Hence the gravity of the people of Filiash during the whole of the quaint proceeding, and their evident sense of its supreme import. In common with the strange rites of the Aïssaouas, it is a survival of those mutilations which were practised by the ancients to celebrate their mourning for the death of the god Ammon.<sup>3</sup> It is the rite of circumcision.

. . . . .

The Moh'arrem or the beginning of the Moham-medan year, is the time of the carnival, and is the time when curious masquerades and celebrations take place in the Ziban.

At Biskra the natives parade the streets with a long tunnel-shaped framework of wood, covered with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 431.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Bertholon says that the rite was for a long time performed with a stone instrument as in primitive times; and the fact that it is the custom of modern North Africans to perform the rite upon a number of children at the same time—the rich man paying in order that this may be accomplished—points to its being a survival of a rite of substitution which in ancient times celebrated the death of the god Ammon. (*Essai sur la Religion des Libyens*, p. 40.)

a piece of stuff painted rudely in a pattern, with white paint. This is intended to represent a lion, and is carried, and moved by a couple of boys who are concealed inside the body. From the head end of the framework two long tusks project, made of bundles of palm stalks, from which the fruit has been gathered. These are set on fire and smoulder slowly, though sometimes the fire bursts out unexpectedly, and has to be extinguished. The animal moved by the boys performs all manner of antics and gambols, while a good deal of comic business goes on. Two natives in burnouses, their faces covered with masks made of white cotton wool, and moustache and beard of the same, carry long heavy poles. With their hands upon their long staves, the ends of which are planted upon the ground, they jump up and down in front of each other like monkeys upon sticks. With the same long poles they slay the lion. It lies upon the ground while the men quarrel as to who has killed it. The quarrel ends in a fight, in the course of which one of the men kills the other. Then a man supposed to represent the doctor comes forward, examines the dead man, and tries to revive him by giving him medicine. Afterwards he revives the lion. The doctor did not seem to be quite certain whether his chief attention was to be given to the man or the lion. A good deal of prompting and consultation between the actors went on, as though the play had been somewhat forgotten. It reminded one of what goes on when village boys are acting the "Seven Champions" in England—the doubt as to the action of the play, the uncertainty as to the words, the whispered hints and promptings. There are a number of supernumerary figures, one of them being a man who carries a sack full of wool, which he asks permission to sell. This is given by a

mock policeman, who is masquerading in European dress!

When the play has been carried through, the lion gets up from the ground, and the whole procession moves on to repeat the performance elsewhere, either in the native village of Old Biskra or in the modern French part of the place.

This goes on for some days. Five or six parties of actors are masquerading in different directions at the same time. Money is collected after each performance, especially from the visitors at the hotels, who flock to the doors to see the fun. For merely as fun most of them regard it, and as rather poor fun into the bargain. Few of the Europeans who desert their dinners for a few moments to watch it remain to see the play finished, fewer still realise the interest and the possible significance of it. I say possible, because while there is no doubt as to the interest of this strange performance, as to its significance there is a difference of opinion. Professor Edmund Doutté thinks that the lion play owes its being to the belief in sympathetic magic.<sup>1</sup> He considers that this and various other plays of the same character, taking place in different parts of the Maghreb, are all connected with the same belief, and are survivals of the rite in which the dead spirit of vegetation was resuscitated in the spring, the ancients believing that the course of vegetation was actually affected by the ceremony, and that by it, nature was aided to continue its course. The same kind of play is found also all over Europe. Mr. E. K. Chambers says that although they differ in many aspects, they have all a common incident, viz. the revival of one of the characters by a doctor. In virtue of this he considers that they may

<sup>1</sup> *Magie et religion.*

be classified as folk-drama in which the resurrection of the year is symbolised, and that this central incident symbolises the annual death of the year, of the fertilisation spirit and its resurrection in spring.<sup>1</sup>

The study of signs and symbols is an interesting one ; assuming, as we may, that every device, every line beyond the purely straight stroke, has had some meaning in its origin, has been an endeavour to illustrate some definite idea of primitive man,<sup>2</sup> the study becomes a fascinating one. North Africa is full of these signs and symbols, signs that bear relation to primitive beliefs, primitive fears, gropings after truth, in the world's childhood ; forms, the original meanings of which have long since been forgotten, but which have grown up and developed through the ages, bearing the imprint of many influences ; the expression of the needs and fears and worship of man. For religions and beliefs are never changed suddenly. Each new one as it grows up adapts the old cults, and carries on ancient rites under new names and with altered significance. Most of the signs and symbols have now assumed a protective character, being used either as amulets, or painted and carved upon buildings to avert the danger of the evil eye.<sup>3</sup>

The evil eye, which, according to Professor Westermarck, is said by the natives to "own two-thirds of the burial-ground," claims universal belief in North Africa. It is the power which is thought to be possessed by special people, or by all in certain circumstances, of blighting and harming human and animate beings, or even inanimate objects, and of controlling events injuriously ; and this belief seems to be an

<sup>1</sup> E. K. Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, vol. i. pp. 206 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> E. K. Elworthy, *Horns of Honour*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Eat not thou the bread of him that hath an evil eye."





AMULETS

instinctive and hereditary conviction of mankind. It is found in all degrees of culture and in all religions ; it is sanctioned by classical writers, and mention is made of it in the Bible. When it is said that "Saul eyed David from that day and forward,"<sup>1</sup> it is meant that the King possessed the evil eye. Later, in Christian times, Paul the Apostle alludes to this power in his suggestion that some harmful spell had been thrown over the Galatians to produce an evil effect upon them.<sup>2</sup>

The direful effect of the evil eye was thought to proceed from a power of injurious fascination such as that possessed by the snake over the bird.<sup>3</sup> The injury might be conveyed in different ways ; one very potent one is over-praise ; evil effects are thought to proceed from envious looks.

In a book that was written in 1603 by Martin Delrio of Louvain, a Jesuit, it is said: "Fascination is a power derived from a pact with the devil, who, when the so-called fascinator looks at another with evil intent, or praises, by means known to himself, infects with evil the person at whom he looks."<sup>4</sup> And the fact that among civilised people it has not been considered good manners to over-praise is doubtless a remnant of this ancient belief that a person may fascinate against his own will or knowledge. "For although we in these later days," says Mr. Elworthy, "scoff at superstition, we still show by our actions and words that in our inmost senses there lurks a superstition which all our culture cannot stifle, and which may well be thought to be a kind of hereditary instinct."

But strong as the belief in the danger of the evil eye has always been, the belief in the possibility of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xviii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Romans called this charm *fascinum*. (Pliny, H.N., xix. 19.)

<sup>4</sup> Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, p. 35.

an antidote has been equally so. To ward off and counteract the dreaded influence and avert the danger, certain means have been adopted and believed in by mankind all over the world. Virtue has been thought to reside in signs and symbols which are employed in various ways, especially as amulets.

The "charms" which people wear upon their persons "for luck," or the brass ornaments hung upon cart-horses, have their origin in this universal dread of the evil eye. In some parts of Europe—in Spain and Italy, for instance—certain things are avowedly worn as protective amulets, either to draw away the attention of the dangerous person by causing him to laugh or think of something else, because the first glance is the dangerous one, or else to enable the wearer of the amulet to utilise the virtue of some higher power.

*The Hand.*—One of the most interesting and also the most ancient and universal of these beneficent and protective talismans is the hand, either in its natural or in a more or less conventionalised form. In the latter, it is worn by every man, woman, and child, and even by animals, in most parts of North Africa.<sup>1</sup> Representations of it are painted upon the outside of almost all buildings, although the uninitiated may not always detect the fact, for the actual resemblance that the design bears to a hand is of little or no importance. For the number five is a charm against evil. And so every representation of the five fingers,<sup>2</sup> or figure of five, has the same protective property. For this

<sup>1</sup> At some districts—Bou Saada, for instance—the amulet is almost totally visibly absent. Where used it is made in every kind of metal, in gold and silver adorned with stones or chased with beautiful designs, or cut out of common white metal, and roughly stamped upon the surface. ("Signs and Symbols," Figs. 26 and 28.)

<sup>2</sup> Marabout's House (p. 340).

reason the Moor or the Berber says, as he extends his hands in the face of a suspected enemy, "Five in your eye"—magic words which are thought to ward off the dreaded danger.<sup>1</sup>

Over one of the chief gateways in Tangiers there is a large upright spread-out hand depicted, much resembling the one upon the keystone of the Moorish arch of La Torre de Justicia in the Alhambra at Granada. "The Hand of Fātimah,"<sup>2</sup> say the Arabs as they point to the former. The Mohammedan in many parts of North Africa also calls the amulet that is so universally worn by the same name—"The Hand of Fātimah," the Prophet's daughter, she who was called "Al Batul," or the Virgin, also "Fātimatu Zzuhra," or the beautiful Fātimah,<sup>3</sup> from whom all of the race of Mohammed trace their descent.

But, as a matter of fact, the symbol of the hand has nothing whatever to do with Fātimah or the Prophet, excepting that Islamism, having adopted, as already said, so much which is infinitely more ancient than itself, has adopted the hand also.

The power of the human hand is an article of very ancient and widespread belief. As a symbol it signifies adoration, benediction, victory, or triumph, or protection, according to the form of its representation. The open and uplifted hand always signifies power, victory, or triumph. Numerous examples of

<sup>1</sup> Professor Westermarck.

<sup>2</sup> The Shiah, a Persian sect, attribute the thumb of the hand to the Prophet; the first finger stands for the Lady Fātimah; second, Ali, her husband; third, Hassan, fourth, Husein, sons of Fātimah and Ali. With other sects also the thumb represents the Prophet.

<sup>3</sup> She was one of the perfect women of the Prophet, who used to say that amongst men there were many perfect, but amongst women only four, the others being Khadijah, his first wife, the Virgin Mary, and Asiyah, the wife of Pharaoh.

these hands were found at Carthage, upon the Phœnician stelæ, and are now in the Lavigèrie Museum, and the Bardo at Tunis. They date from the period of the foundation of Carthage to its destruction by the Romans ("Signs and Symbols," Figs. 24 and 25). The following is a translation of the inscription upon one of them, over which an open hand is carved in low relief ("Signs and Symbols," Fig. 25):—

"Cyprus de Moloch Baal vow made by Bodasarsth, son of Bodmelgart, son of Bodastaroth, son of Bodmelgart, son of Sarebim to the goddess mother face of Baal and to Lord Baal-Hammon (he has heard his voice)."

Here the hand is the hand of triumph. It is the same symbol of victory that Saul set up for himself at Carmel,<sup>1</sup> the jadh, which has been wrongly translated "place."<sup>2</sup> Absolom's "places" were also hands carved probably in the same manner as the Phœnician stelæ at Carthage and elsewhere. With these the Israelites must have been very familiar, for Carmel was not far from Tyre, where, says Mr. Elworthy, the uplifted hand was doubtless a common sign.

Professor E. K. Wallis Budge mentions a very striking example of the antiquity of the use of the hand as a symbol of power to be seen at Tel-el-Amarna, nineteen miles from Cairo, upon the tomb of the monotheistic Pharaoh, Khuenaten, who, because he preferred the heretical worship of the sun to that of Amen-Ra, called himself the "beloved of the sun's disc," rather than by the usual and time-honoured title of the "beloved of Amen."

In these scenes the King and his court are adoring the sun, whose rays are stretched out towards them; each ray terminating in an open hand. Here again

<sup>1</sup> E. K. Elworthy, *Horns of Honour*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> "And Saul set himself up a place" (2 Sam. xviii. 18).

the hand of power and divine presence is represented, and the date of the tomb shows the hand as a symbol to have been used at least as early as 1500 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

It has continued in popular and universal use all over the world down to the present day, alike among pagans, Mohammedans, and Christians. Chiefly it is used now as a protective symbol and worn as an amulet against the evil eye. Christians when carrying it, as far as I am aware, give no explanation of their reason for attaching protective properties to the hand. The Mohammedan, however, always definitely connects the symbol in some way or other with the Prophet.<sup>2</sup> In North Africa, as I have said before, it is the "Hand of Fātimah."

It has always been thought that domestic animals are peculiarly liable to the dangerous influence of the evil eye, especially the horse and the camel. It is to avert this danger that the cab-horses are taken by their drivers to the Church of St. Eusebius in Rome to be sprinkled with holy water and blessed by the priests upon the feast of St. Antony of Padua, who is the special patron of all four-footed animals.

When one sees many of the miserable, thin, half-starved, ill-used creatures being taken away after the ceremony, one cannot help wishing that the owners and drivers would themselves endeavour to counteract the supposed evil by better treatment of the poor

<sup>1</sup> The hand in another position, that used for the sacerdotal blessing, was an amulet long before Christian times. ("Signs and Symbols," Fig. 26.)

<sup>2</sup> There is a curious relic, that is looked upon as very sacred, in the Church of St. Sophia at Constantinople—a white mark in the dark purple marble exactly like a spread-out human hand, and about the same size. It looks artificial, but it is really formed by the marking in the marble. It is placed near the mihrab, and is said to be the hand of the Prophet. It is believed to protect all who pray near it from the evil eye. The column upon which it is, is said to have been brought from an ancient temple. (E. K. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, p. 250.)

animals, rather than trust to charms. It would make the world a happier one—for horses at any rate. But the dread of this blighting influence is a very real one. In some parts of Italy the mere fact of a person noticing or patting the horse inspires the owner with fear. I remember an instance of this not long ago when an Italian who had been hired at Ravello for the drive round the coast to Cava, stopped me in a hasty and excited manner as I was stroking his horse after I left the carriage.

In those parts of North Africa where the camel is the chief beast of burden, this animal is always provided with an amulet. The beautiful ornament reproduced opposite page 471 is intended for the neck of a camel. It is made in white metal; the raised jewel in the centre is of the green of an emerald. It was cut and designed by an inhabitant of one of the queer barrel-shaped houses at Medinine, and bought by us upon the spot. So also was the crescent-shaped brooch in the same illustration.<sup>1</sup>

Another very favourite amulet for horses and camels in North Africa is a tiny bag containing a verse of the Qu'ran, written upon a scrap of paper and suspended round the creature's neck. The safeguard is also frequently hung round the necks of children, and is doubtless akin to the Jewish phylactery, worn upon the forehead.

*Horns.*—The belief in the value of horns as an antidote against the evil eye is also deeply rooted and widely spread. The virtue is not confined to actual horns, but is extended to anything that simulates or has the shape or likeness of a horn. Most people are

<sup>1</sup> The ornaments Zebah and Zalmunna upon the necks of the camels of the two Kings of Midian that were taken away by Gideon after he had killed them, were doubtless amulets of the same description as the one in the illustration (Judges viii. 21).

familiar with the little Italian charm in the shape of an antelope's horn made in silver or coral, bone or mother-of-pearl, and the *mano cornuto*, or horned hand, so-called because the gesture made resembles a horn. I am not, however, aware that this gesture, which is common in Southern Europe, is employed at all in North Africa, where the use of horns as a protection against the evil eye is so general.

Horns there certainly are here in abundance. You may see them fastened upon the doors, hanging outside the shops, and in the markets. At Sousse they are particularly numerous. Also at Medinine they are common. Upon one of the doors we saw nailed the dried tail of a fish, simulating horns. The hand, however, was rare at the latter place as a protective symbol, though there were many instances of the fish, and also of the conventional sun.

*The Fish.*—The fish, a favourite talisman in many parts of the world, is also much used as a symbol in North Africa, especially perhaps towards the south. In Kairouan it is very frequently seen; in Medinine also it appears in small carved bas-reliefs over the doors of the houses.

The fish has always been looked upon as sacred.<sup>1</sup> The symbol is associated with Isis and Diana; the latter, being the goddess who had power over moisture, was symbolised in this aspect by a crab—the most obvious and ancient symbol of the reproductive power of water being the fish.<sup>2</sup> The fish is also the emblem of Dagon, the fish god of the Phœnicians, and in this connection may have found its way into North Africa.

The fish symbol was adopted by Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> At Sousse there is an annual feast when fish are fed. (Dr. Bertholon, *Essai sur la Religion des Libyens*, p. 62.)

<sup>2</sup> E. K. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye*, p. 228.

Christians, to account for and to justify its presence in the new religion, are said to have declared that they were "as fish," being "born again of water." An elaborate anagram upon the Greek word *Ichthus*, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour," is also said to have been invented as a reason for the adoption of the fish as a Christian sign. But this idea is discredited by some authorities, as being too far fetched.

*Seal of Solomon.*—Amongst the symbols found in North Africa, perhaps none are more frequently used than the figure of the five-pointed star, called the Pentagram or Seal of Solomon,<sup>1</sup> and the hexagram "Signs and Symbols," Fig. 31), formed of two equilateral triangles and called the Shield of David.<sup>2</sup>

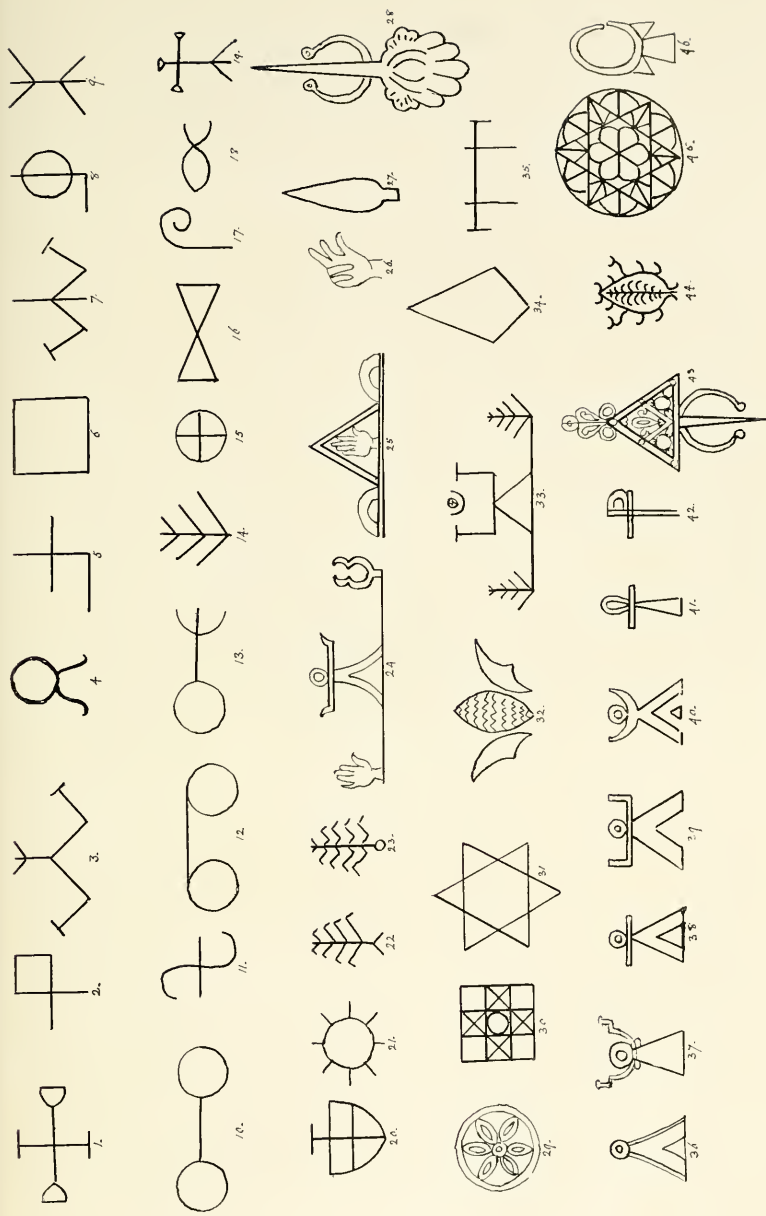
In Semitic belief the number five has always been thought to be possessed of peculiar virtue, and magic qualities may have been attributed to the Seal of Solomon because of its five-pointed form. It is especially used as a charm against the Djinn or Dæmons. And here it may be well to give some explanation of these mysterious beings, who enter so largely into the Semitic cult. According to Mr. Robertson Smith—

"The pagan Arabs believe nature to be full of living beings of a superhuman kind. But a superhuman being is not necessarily a god. He becomes a god only when he enters into stated relations with man, or rather with a community of men. And the Djinnns are feared and avoided instead of, like the gods, being approached with reverential awe and hopeful trust. For though there is no essential physical distinction between demons and gods, there is the fundamental difference that the former are strangers, and therefore by the law of the desert enemies, while the gods to the worshippers who frequent

---

<sup>1</sup> In the museum at Carthage is a grostic amulet. On each side is a figure with a halo and an inscription. On one side, "Depart, O hated one—may the Angel Arcaph pursue you;" on the other, "Seal of Solomon, help me." The rest of the inscription is illegible. (Père Delattre, *Ruines de Carthage*.)

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Encyclopædia*.



SIGNS AND SYMBOLS



their sanctuaries are a familiar and friendly power. For the Jinn has no worshippers, and the gods themselves become Jinns if they lose their worshippers." <sup>1</sup>

Man in conquering the earth for himself has had to contend against these unknown dæmons; where they reign, there he is afraid to set his foot.

The Djinn are able to assume the forms of various animals; but as the anthropomorphic idea has grown and developed, the Djinn, in common with the gods, are more generally supposed to take the form of man; and the supernatural animals of the original conception appear as the beasts on which they ride.<sup>2</sup>

From these dreaded beings, however, it is possible, by means of talismans, to procure protection—even, indeed, to obtain their services. And no man ever gained such absolute authority and power over them as did Suleiman ibn Daoud, the son of David. This King, who is looked upon as the most wonderful magician that ever lived, and is said to have been monarch over the whole earth, possessed a very powerful talisman—a ring which, it was said, came from heaven.<sup>3</sup> It was engraved with the great name of God, and was composed partly of brass, partly of iron. With the brass He sealed His written commands

<sup>1</sup> *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 119 *et seq.* (condensed).

<sup>2</sup> The serpent, however, a creature of which men have a peculiar horror and fear, has still retained its supernatural character. (Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 130.)

<sup>3</sup> Solomon's ring, upon which his kingdom depended, is said to have been stolen from him by a devil who assumed the King's form and managed to deceive Amina, one of his concubines, into whose care the ring had been entrusted. By means of this trick the devil became possessed of the kingdom, and sat on the throne, making what alterations in the law he pleased. After a space of forty days Sakhar, the devil, flew away and threw the signet into the sea. It was immediately swallowed by a fish, which, being caught and taken to Solomon, he found the ring in its belly. Having by this means recovered his kingdom, he tied a great stone round Sakhar's neck and threw him into the Lake of Tiberias. (Sales' Translation of Talmudic Fable.)

to the good Djinn ; with the iron to the evil ones. Here once more we have an instance of the magical qualities with which this latter metal is endowed against the powers of evil, or Djinn, who were legendary creatures of the Stone Age, to whom the new invention of iron was thought to be obnoxious. Suleiman is said to have had unlimited powers over both good and evil Djinn, over birds and beasts, the winds and nature generally. By virtue of this wonderful charm, his seal, he is said to have compelled the Djinn to assist in the building of the Temple of Jerusalem. Many of them he converted to the true faith ; and many of those who remained obstinate he confined in prison.<sup>1</sup>

No wonder that the symbol with which this ring was engraved is considered a potent talisman.<sup>2</sup> In North Africa it is worked into the arabesques of the mosques, and is painted or carved on bas-reliefs over or upon the doors of houses. It is engraved upon tombstones and personal ornaments.

*The Palm.*—But even the popularity of the Seal of Solomon pales before that of the palm, or the palm-leaf, as a symbol in North Africa. It may safely be said that there is hardly any building upon which it is not somewhere to be found, in some form or other, for it has been thought that the device upon stelæ and other stones generally supposed to be the pineapple is really the spathe of the male palm-flower.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> "We made the wind subject to him ; it ran gently at his command, whithersoever he directed. And we also put the devils in subjection under him, and among them such as were every way skilled in building and in diving for pearls ; and others we delivered to him bound in chains, saying this is our gift ; therefore be bounteous, or be sparing unto whom thou shalt think fit, without rendering an account." (*Al Koran*, chap. xxxviii. p. 342.)

<sup>2</sup> The principal marabout of the Ouled Sidi Cheikh possesses a mysterious ring on which is engraved the Seal of Solomon. To the profane this ring is said to be invisible. (Père Delattre, *Les Ruines de Carthage*.)

<sup>3</sup> M. Louis Siret. (*Anthropologie*, 1909.)

palm appears upon nearly all the Carthaginian stelæ, especially upon those dedicated to the great African god Hammon, but it has also been found upon objects dating from a civilisation earlier than the Punic.<sup>1</sup> M. Ohnefalsch-Richter thinks that it is a Mycenaean symbol. It was certainly an ancient Libyan one before the foundation of Carthage.<sup>2</sup> The palm also was the great Libyan totem.

The conventional hand, the five fingers having a common shaft, bears so close a resemblance to the device of the palm-leaf that it is difficult sometimes to distinguish between the two. The illustrations ("Signs and Symbols," Figs. 22 and 23) are symbols which appear always upon the wall or door of a house in North Africa wherein a marriage is about to take place, and are called the marriage sign. They are always very large, reaching nearly from the eaves of the house to the ground, or covering almost the whole of the door, and are painted white. In Tunis and Kairouan they are especially in use, and as marriages are of everyday occurrence, and the signs are left upon the house afterwards, it may be imagined how common and frequent they are.

It only remains to speak of the signs and symbols that we found at Tebessa in that portion of the monastery which was built in the early part of the fifth century B.C., and afterwards used by the Byzantines as a cavalry barracks, or as a stable for their horses.<sup>3</sup>

The signs ("Signs and Symbols," Figs. 1-21) are probably mason marks, placed upon each stone as it was finished by the man who cut it in order

<sup>1</sup> M. Ohnefalsch-Richter has found it upon a vase of Vaphio. (Dr. Bertholon.)

<sup>2</sup> The garments of the Libyan chiefs represented upon the tomb of Seti I. are ornamented with branches of palm-leaves. (Dr. Bertholon.)

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 230.

to identify his work. Possibly they possess no further significance or interest. Yet as you wander in the silence of that ruined hall, whose walls have echoed to the voices of the monks, to the shouts of the Donatist wreckers, and the jests and laughter of the Byzantine soldiery, every sign, every symbol becomes a human document—a sealed book it may be as yet, possibly one of which the seals will never be broken. Mystery broods over North Africa, and the mystery draws you on, and makes you long to dig deep, where as yet the surface has hardly been disturbed.

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